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# SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE





*by the same author*

★

Canons of Giant Art

Dance of the Quick and the Dead

Liszt

A Background for Domenico Scarlatti

La Vie Parisienne

Poltergeists

★

*written in collaboration with*

*Francis Bamford*

Edinburgh

*Sacred & Profane*



*by*

*Sacheverell Sitwell*


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To  
MY BROTHER  
greatest of  
spiritual companions  
1916-1919



## *Preface*

he small engraved scenes with which this book is illustrated are drawn from two sources, from a collection of old Victorian engraved writing paper, and from engraved billheads found among a sack of old letters. Seaside terraces and stucco houses of a hundred years ago are as much a part of the Englishman's background as the rural scenes of Birket Foster, that are so rapidly disappearing, and their purpose in these pages is not only as ornament but as a proving or reinforcement of the actual scene. These steel engravings give the solid background for so many flights and soarings of the imagination



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*Book I*

PRELUDIO







**T**his is written in the dark days, when there is evil in the air. No one knows which way to turn, or what to work for. It is of no use to seek out the wilderness. There will always be an aeroplane overhead. The mental and spiritual horizon has come as near to our eyes as on an evening of thick fog or mist. Its only lamps are the shuttered lights in our own houses. It is an evening in a backyard, near to an arterial road. Lorries and motors pass noisily. Near by there is a road drill, hooded for the night, and the voice of the announcer tells ill news.

It is only by spiritual or imaginative increase that the world can be saved. Religion cannot do it. No priest can halt this speeding up of time. For the tempo has changed. The winds blow at hurricane. There are ice cold heat and great frosts of fire. All things are altering. Nothing can last, or is secure from destruction. Only the human head and heart, the brain and the bloodstream can survive in this tempest. They die more easily than trees or flowers, but knowledge and feeling do not linger in dead bones. (It is the human head and the human heart that are exiled now, and must build for themselves pavilions or tabernacles in the new world of to-morrow.) For knowledge can be taught, while feeling is bred in the heart and does not die with death. Both things are immortal. War or tyranny but force them into flower.

Heaven or Hell are no longer in the sky or underneath the earth. If they have any truth whatever it is upon earth, to be bought or sold with money. Like all other truths they have lost their meaning, and only with painful experience can it be learned again. For our's is the day of disillusionment. It is not a day of wrath so much as a day of disappointment. If catastrophe does not come, then the horizon will be empty of all gods and devils. The age of greatest emptiness will dawn. It is under the shadows of tragedy or bathos that we live our lives. There is no choice

## *The Storm is Coming*

between them. It is one, or other. But both are blind and will obliterate the past. The world is a raging whirlwind blowing the dead leaves. The storm is coming. It grows dark and darker. Physical or metaphysical, the golden age or age of gold, are stalls or open theatres at this last of fairs. Already, the first drops from the thundercloud have fallen. The canvas walls are sopping wet. The painted scenery is running with its colours. The audience is hurrying home

It is for this dwindling public that we mount our plays. For, at this moment, the only dry shelter is upon these boards. Now, when everything is threatened and in danger, we must walk with rags and bones.



## *I. Preludio*

**D**own every street you can hear the noises of a fair. No one can walk at his ordinary pace towards it. All are hurrying, or running. The steam organs play a dozen tunes all at the same time. It is a street of tents with their flaps lifted so that they are booths or shops. This is a fair, and also the purlieu of some shrine of pilgrimage. It is the world in little. There are shooting galleries, stalls of the sacred heart; they sell china and handkerchiefs emblomed with the image; there are dark dens for photography, or for fortune telling; trestles of bright fruits and sweets; songbirds in cages, lifelike images in wax, amulets and rosaries and holy charms.

Both kinds of light are playing: the false and the real, bright sunlight and the arc lamp. It is night and day.

No one would know that every man and woman is dead. But alive or dead, we must colour them to life. The cold bones of the skeleton have a living entity for us. The dead, who are but ashes, are more dead to us than they. For a time, therefore, they are flesh and blood, and, in the same way that even the hermit or the prisoner has his traffic in clothes and food, his rags or clouts, his crusts or crumbs, so must the dead, if we are to think of them at all, have some ambience, some amenities of the living, a stone bed that is a coffin, a leaden coverlet, something for the moth or spider. If that, why not the simulacra of the living, also, since these are the dead of all ages and of every clime, their peculiarities in dress or manners become the symbols for what their lives have been. It is by means of these images that they can be given life again, or a portrait of it.

For these reasons there is no sadness, nor melancholy. This is only a place of waiting. The distractions of the fair are to while away the long and lengthening hours. Those who love it for its noise and colour, and those who only look on, are typical of the two sorts of men and women, those who have lived in life, and

## *The Population of the Dead*

those who have been kept outside it, a distinction or difference which is more true of all men and women than any bar of race or religion. Such a Heaven or Hell of negation or achievement is the subject of which we treat in these pages, choosing our examples from this multitude who are waiting here for judgment. This is their identity and it is to this that they are destined. Whether they know it or not is uncertain and we need not mind, for, in every case, the few days or hours of light are all, and more than all, that they ask for. They have been summoned out of darkness into light again and it is only this that matters to them. Meanwhile, they are to be thought of as living in the illusion that this is their ordinary life, that they have always been used to it, that nothing has changed. They are not to know that they have lived before and have, since, been dead. It is the nocturnal, or dream world, in which the most unfamiliar and unexpected things have utmost realism and become, in a moment, the accustomed surroundings of life. You have known nothing else and, on waking, are born again, as it were, with newly opened eyes that look out with surprise and astonishment upon the world.

It is, now, a question of scale. The world and everything that is in it is our stage. And, as well, the imaginary heights or depths, the Heaven or Hell created by conscience or ignorance, make our perspective and are the machinery of every illusion that we present. If this is a day of judgment, a tribunal or chosen audience before whom these scenes are played, then comment and criticism must waver and keep uncertain as to their decision until the end. Perhaps there can be no final verdict where every implication is understood. When held close to the glass, the details of anything living, or that ever had life, must remain a mystery and a wonder. No words, nor theory, can explain them. The gift that was given to them allows of no explanation. It runs in the bloodstream; it is vested in the blood of men and women, but no brain can simulate its processes. This experience of life, which admits of no explanation even in its most simple moments, calls, in fact, for narration and not for criticism. It is only possible to depict its tendencies. The inner and unconscious workings of that machinery form a mystery of which only the outer edges have been reached. The more it is probed, the more mysterious it becomes. From birth to death it is unending mystery.

## *Stalls and Amulets*

And so our detail is exaggerated and epical in proportion. The town of tents is provisioned as for a siege, the shooting galleries are glittering museums of glass or china; the sacred emblems make an arsenal of hearts and limbs, their cheap photographs are as portraits of many sittings; the astrologer has both hemispheres of stars to gaze upon, the orchard opens behind the applestall; there are fields of sugar cane, black faces and bright kerchiefs: green boughs for the songbirds: plays and pantomimes in wax: the land of red cheeks, marionettes in wood: silver charms and coral charms, bells and hearts and cradles



## 2. *Castillo di Bibataubin*

**T**his is what we see. Two men: one playing a trumpet, the other carrying a hooded black box upon a stick. They are itinerant fortune tellers, first heard and then seen in Sicily, twenty years ago, near the theatre of the marionettes. Now there are two sorts or races of marionettes. This was not the Pulcinella theatre, with Pulcinella's house at the entrance, whence the snapping voice of the mannikin came forth. That would have meant the Chiaja and the tinkling of mandolines. This is Sicily and not Naples. The marionettes are Knights in armour, Saracens and Paladins.

The first warning was the trumpet call. It was of peculiar and military import. It spoke of spectral soldiers, moonlight sentries who were no more than statues, and cats serenading upon the tiles. We should have said that, on top of the hooded box, there stood a glass bowl of water. The crowd paid their 'centesimi' and a pair of small black imps, or devils, not more than two inches high, went down through the water and brought back with them a metal number. Tallying with this, a folded paper was taken out from a drawer in the box, and this had the fortune printed upon it. The devils were made of some shining black substance and were, of course, guided by a thread. This game of fortunes had come down in the world. A hundred years ago it had been played in drawing-rooms, and in the parlatorio of the nuns.

Day after day, on those February mornings of twenty years ago, you could hear this fanfare from the streets near by. The world, upon all those mornings after a war, was full of sunlight. Smoke climbed straight into the air. Even the dust was golden.

But it was so curious, the mating of that military trumpet call. It had something Spanish in it, something from far away. It had the Spanish tread, the slow, tapping marches of long ago. This was what made it so ghostly and peculiar. Later on, after

## *The Barracks at Granada*

another year or two, it was to recall to mind nothing else than the old barracks of Granada, the so-called Castillo di Bibataubin\*. It was before the façade of that barracks, or from its interior court, and nowhere else, that this trumpet call must, first, have sounded. Now, it has become no more than a moonlit ghost, 'stalking beside the castanetted sea', along the shores of the Conca d'Oro, the Golden Shell, and in the slums of Palermo. What has become of that strange barracks? Where are those two men gone to?

\* But we must describe the Castillo di Bibataubin. It is, or used to be, a long building with a tower at either end, the whole extent of its façade seeming to be compounded of a military red, the red of a soldier's coat, and a white, like the white of pipeclay. At the corners of its towers, or bastions, high up on the walls, stood statues of grenadiers. They wore the tall, half sugarloaf hats of the Prussian Guard in the time of Frederick the Great. Their wigs were powdered and tied down into a pigtail, they had fierce bristling moustachios, and their muskets were on their shoulders. In the centre of the façade was a monumental doorway, flanked by pairs of twisted, or Salomonic pillars, and, above these, guarded again by statues of grenadiers, sat a lion on a stone cushion, brandishing a drawn sword, and wearing a crown. The architect of this building (the fate of which during the Civil War we have been unable to discover) was Pedro de Ribera, the designer of the Puente de Toledo and the strange Hospicio Provincial, at Madrid, and reputed to be the most extreme of the followers, or heresiarchs, of Churriguerra. The stucco statues of the grenadiers, with their echo of Potsdam, struck so curious a note in the Moorish city of the Alhambra, not far, too, from that oddest of all interiors, the sacristy of the Cartuja. What can have happened to these statues, in the terrible wars of the dinamiteros? They seemed to stand there almost in prophecy of something sinister to come.




### 3. *Ursari*

**T**hey are here. The fanfare is sounding. And here are Ursari, bear leaders, like the family I saw as a boy at Eton, in 1914. That, too, was a fateful year, a year of death. They appeared, suddenly, one winter evening, just as it was getting dark. It is a long time ago, now, but they could never be forgotten. They were a man and two women. He seems, at this distance of time, to have worn a conical fur cap, a coat that I cannot remember, and some form of leggings. He did not wear shoes: his feet were bandaged, as it were, or wrapped in rags. The women, who were young girls, were dressed in a way that has left no impression, but they had perfectly round faces. Their faces were so round that it must be a tribal characteristic. On being asked who they were, and whence they came, their answer was only, 'Bohémiens'. This meant little. And they could, or would, say nothing more.

They had with them two bears. The man played a bugle, while he led one bear: the other, which was the smaller of the two, followed the elder girl. Her sister beat a drum, or tambourine. Both bears walked upright on their hindlegs, wore muzzles, and were led along with a rope or chain, being menaced all the time with a stout cudgel. Now the bear has wooden stupidities, wooden virtues. Something could come out of his tragedy, if he could ever learn. But he can learn no more than to walk upright, and to dance. This he is taught by putting a heated tray under his feet, so that he lifts his paws.

I remember, so well, the trumpet and the drum, the round faced Romis, and the slow dancing of their animals. Where had they come from? And whither were they going? They were, probably, Gypsies from the Carpathians. Or they may have started from the Caucasus and seen the Caspian and the fair at Nijni. But what does it matter? My companions had forgotten them by the morning, and they never came back again.

## 4. Reprise

uch ghosts are, in the strictest sense, autobiographical and personal. They are the private possessions of their owner, as much his property, it may be, as the life of each individual in their number was to himself. Nothing can take them away. They survive, even when their embodiments have been long dead. Everyone must have his or her phantoms of this kind. And there are the incalculable armies of the past.

That, as we have said, was long, long ago. And, a week or two later, reading Shakespeare at the most subtle and receptive time of childhood, I came to these words, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The occasion is when Anne Page is serving dinner in her parents' house. All through the play she will only speak, as it were, in the words that are allotted to her. It is as if her personality is in suspension, sleeping, or perhaps, dreaming. 'The dinner is on the table, my father desires your worship's company.' 'The dinner attends you, Sir.' 'I pray you, Sir, walk in.' And, later: 'Why do your dogs bark so? Be there bears in the town?' 'I think there are, Sir, I heard them talked of.' 'Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!'

Such are but phantoms of association, inseparable from each other by the long linking, the interlocking of their images. That day in old Windsor, when the dogs barked so, though it was but fiction, had been observed. Shakespeare had seen the bears in a town, and heard the dogs barking. 'Hark! hark! the dogs do bark, the beggars are coming to town', that old nursery rhyme is, also, in this idiom. It, too, belongs to the same image group. They, too, then, were nomads or vagrants, the beggars of the rhyme. But in the time of Shakespeare the Ursari were not yet known. It would seem, then, as if their shadow fell both ways, as if in the bears of the cruel bear pit, brought, probably, from Bohemia or the Pyrenees, Shakespeare had, as in all else, been prophet and foretold what was to come. ✓

## *The Twelve Hours of Midnight*

Next sound, upon this bank of primroses and violets, are the twelve hours of midnight, one upon another in the antlered darkness. And, in between, the winding of a horn. It is silent, and you listen, and it winds again. The tryst and the enchantment are this hour in one. There are a myriad footfalls on the leaves, little winds like little voices in the ear; disaster, catastrophe in a raindrop falling, tragedies of dew.

'The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on.' Now comes a footstep; and the horn is wound so near that you hear the hunter's lips close upon the mouthpiece. It is the oak-tree of Herne the Hunter; and the ghost of him with great ragged horns blows a blast again and shakes the stem. The ragged moonlight opens overhead. It obscures; and, at once, the night is lit with lanterns. They are raised on long poles out of the pit where they lay couched and are now displayed to the night. Sir John Falstaff lifts off his horns; Mistress Page and Mistress Ford appear. Doctor Caius comes one way and steals away a sprite in green; Slender another way and takes off an elf in white; and Fenton comes and steals away Anne Page. A noise of hunting is heard within.

So ends the play; but we continue its illusion into a perpetual noon. The scene is the timber houses of the town, each set with gardens, a room in the Garter Inn, or the dells of the forest. No one ages, they are fixed and set in time. The Merry Wives, in their high steeple hats, are the ripe goddesses of that mediaeval day: they inspect the huge kitchens and cuff the scullions. Among them work the maids whom the sprites, that midnight, had pinched blue as bilberries. The snapdragon fires blow high into the chimneys. Across the street, the lit mullions of the Garter Inn spangle the darkness, for, if it is noon, if this domestic peace of the hearth and the distaff, this antiquity of loom and spinning-wheel, bespeak the day it must be followed by late hours for Ford and Page, for Falstaff and for Bardolph. 'Let us every one go home, and laugh this sport o'er by a country fire; Sir John and all', and these words of Mistress Page, spoken after midnight in the forest, bring on the darkness. It needs a country fire, a knocking of the red logs, in order to see over again in memory the comedy of Falstaff in the laundry basket, Falstaff in women's clothes, or his, trysting in the forest. Their day burns

## *Oak Tree of Herne the Hunter*

from its beginning to its end among the embers. But the play of bigger, or giant forms never ceases in the background. They plot and counterplot, and the web of their intrigues, the laundry basket which, in intention, is the wooden horse of Troy burlesqued, the horns, or mock antlers of Falstaff at foot of the antlered oaktree, Falstaff, in fact, masked or disguised as the wild hunter; the midnight revels in the forest; the play of Fenton and Anne Page; these episodes, which are the bricks and mortar of their world, although it is but the painted scene and no reality, take on that same truth, that faithfulness to the genius loci, which has been the animation of our earlier episodes, in the darkening street, outside the Eton houses

It was because of that, and of the subsequent reading of this play, that the genius loci asserted itself in potency, demanding a scene which should be as typical of its own stringencies in place and time. Falstaff, in the mask of Actaeon, came in answer to this out of the shadow of the antlered tree. When his braggart ghost was unmasked, then the world that was round him was invoked. The Merry Wives appeared. Lanterns were lifted into the air and the woodland rang with laughter. All the high spirits of an age that knew nothing of the past and cared less for the future sang and danced in the moonlight. It was the end of the play. It was only fiction and did but travesty the truth.

The shadows fall and the earth smells sweet. An opened door shakes the hollyhocks and sends down raindrops from their spires. The polyanthus is wet, red velvet, the rose petal is a wet, wet check. It is last week, and to-morrow. It is serenading time, in between the showers. The tempo quickens, and now the air is quick and brilliant, crisp and sparkling with the light of many persons. The street is full. Everyone talks at once, and lovers are whispering together. Plans are laid to fill the summer evening. It is as gay as with the noises of a fair. No one can walk at his ordinary pace. All are hurrying, or running.

It is so long, long ago. The hand that wrote of her, of Anne Page, of Fenton's 'Sweet Nan', dead for so long a time, himself, wrote thus of an age that only lived for him in old wives' tales. Steeple hats and rat tailed shoes were ghosts of the cupboard, or of the witch's coven. It is only the old who keep the dust and rags; there is never a young foot in a rat tail shoe. But her steeple

### *- The Steeple Hat*

hat, a witch's covering, hangs upon the wall. Its linen lining, like a little white cap, displays its newness. There are wooden pattens by the fire and a broomstick in the corner.



## 5. *Invocation*

**B**ut hearken! do you not feel it in the pores of your skin! It is coming down. it is descending. So who will follow me into the age of gold? It is late in the evening, and we will begin softly by looking through a window.

We look through a window upon the fruit-gatherers. It is a Gothick dairy, a rustic house of thatch and flint. Behind this the blue evening is not a hemisphere but a fathomless blue height descending. It quivers and darkens, for the winds blow upon it out of the cool. At any moment it is more deep and solemn than before. It is the drop scene, the painted backcloth. For the detail lies in static stillness. Look in, and look again! The air you breathe has wings of scent, for they brush and go past you, they fan you with their wings. It is honeysuckle, night scented stock, and night tobacco flower. You breathe in deep breaths of them, begin to feel and see. And, of a sudden, you are in this other world: no longer at the window, but treading on the rustic floor. You are safe here.\* There is no intruder from outside. The scents are narcotic; and their magic does its work.

There is a symbol in this looking through the window. It is moonlight at the windowsill. And now it climbs, and shines down on the dancing floor. A girl, who is milkmaid, or dancer, looks at you and makes a little curtsy. She crosses the floor, and sweeps it before you with a goose's wing. It is her broom, or besom.

The white goose wing is, all told, her wand or emblem. Its place is by the fireside, for all the white wings that have beaten on the window leads in winter days of snow. And, also, it is in emblem of the meadows, the goose pastures, or of that cackling before the cottage door. It is a fitter household symbol than the witch's broom. As she stoops, barelegged like Cinderella, she becomes physical and pleads for your attention. Her figure was shaped for this. She has a dancer's limbs and looks at you, now,

## *Interior Scene*

with recognition in her eyes. They meet with your eyes over intervening time. Or is this the genius of convention or of style, the dancer's parted lips and smiling eyes. Her steeple hat, her witch's covering, hangs upon the wall, and her red cloak below it, to wear to market. How is this antiquity, when it burns up in a breath! In this moment, in this heart breath, our hand has lifted up the latch. We are in the porch and the daughter will open wide the door. Now the dead are our's to do what we will with, but make love to them. We can pity them, or envy them, can speak of them or write of them; but we cannot bring the blood into their cheeks. Enter, then, and sit down by the window! And, again, her eyes meet with your eyes over interposing time. Look how her face is rounded! This is in youth, and for the pleasure of your glances. Her hair is braided into two long tails that touch her shoulders. They are summer shoulders and the dark hair touches on her white skin. Blue and white are the colours of her dress; white sleeves and apron, and blue for her body and upon her heart.

And, while you look at her, the impossibility of contact blows like a chilly breath upon you. There is this cold air between you, and your hands can never touch. She is more dead than the dead spirit of what once was love. That, also, can never burn again, but this has no heat at all. It is in the eyes and in the heart, but not in the blood. It is no more than a play\* to be watched. Ah! if the blood ran warm this mystery of time would out. And so this young, this unfledged ghost lasts for but a moment longer in the sunlight. The breath of that old air, for it is all that we are allowed, burns with astonishing clearness. It is only fiction and does but travesty the truth. All, indeed, is fiction, and the creation of the fancy; but how, otherwise, can the past be invoked, or even the moment live before our eyes! It is only through truth transcendentalized that the average or approximate can come out. Such are the purposes in exaggeration; or these are, in effect, the fine plumes of poetry. They make a clearer lens and magnify the detail.

We see her in an interior which is the evocation of the honeysuckle on the porch, the nodding hollyhocks, and the warm summer evening that flows in through the door. It is to be imagined that we have come in to visit her, and this has that

## *Household Symbols*

excitement of universal experience which consists in the first sight that we have of the surroundings or home of someone with whom we are in love. The humblest objects take on a sentimental importance and value as having lived for so long a time in intimacy with their owner, if only in possession of her parents or relations. Even so, they have had her constantly before their eyes, for we credit pieces of furniture or ornaments with human senses when it is a case of such emotional propinquity. They are imbued with shades of her pathos or personality. They are the abstract image of herself in childhood; and it is with that sharpened apprehension or perception, itself a characteristic of childhood, that we look upon every smallest detail of the room and drink in her movements and appearance as though this were our only opportunity and it could never come again. The duration of this moment is for no more than that of a long held breath, but its force of emotion strikes in at the heart so that it is like a farewell. This dead thing is about to go back to her grave again. Even now, her coffin lid, like this open door, of which the latch blows to and closes, is shutting down upon her. All, all is going.

And yet, if it is possible to recall her into life, if she lives though for only a moment more before our eyes, the wind of this can breathe once again upon her lips. The miracles of creation, after many pains, accomplish themselves quickly and with ease. As we write this, that interior within the door burns up into an illumination of its smallest details. The black steeple hat, hanging from its peg, is in proof or signature of its truth. Remark that it casts no shadow; there are no shadows in this land that lies between. The lights are in gouache colours, in level smooth washes. There is stilted or exaggerated calm or stillness. Each small object has its individual life and is self-confined, although, like each separate chair of a number of chairs that have been arranged so as all to face in one direction, they have a harmony of intention, a corporate body, as it were, over and above their separate identity. Not that there is quite the unanimity of this; for it is more of a haphazard arrangement like the accidental placing of objects and pieces of furniture which have, yet, a purpose of usefulness, a willing, if unconscious, servitude towards their owner. They are, it may be, in geometrical harmony




## *Household Symbols*

with each other, a condition that has been mellowed by long association together, so that each little thing is indispensable and, if one was missing, the whole number would be out of place. It is in this meticulous setting, where every separate object has its own little ambience or territory, its space in time like the ticking of a clock, that for the lasting of a breath, but for no more than that, this precise and stereoscopic vision burns upon the air. Even the broomstick, which stands in the corner, has its own character. It is as important a symbol as the household broom of Vermeer, rendered, like thatch, in the separation of its twigs or straws upon the polished floor. The blue and white colours of her dress fortify this similarity, but it is dissipated out of recognition by the knowledge that this theme is so much older. The long braids of her hair touch upon her shoulders and are like serpents at her breasts darting into her bodice, or twining their heads upon the surface of her gown. How white and thin are her hands! Flowers or leaves beat upon the mullion. The wooden pattens make a clatter. A breath of wind lifts the long carpet. The latch blows to and closes.

But now the fruit-gatherers bring in their baskets of ripe cherries. They are heaped, one upon another, shoulder high, as high as her bare shoulders. The topmost cherries bob their stalks where her hat peg, a rusty nail, is hidden in that black steeple. More and more cherries come. It is the cherry harvest. And, near by, there is the sound of mill waters. The mill, or it is the clock of time, never ceases, even here, in this reign of plenitude. Its bones, the whitened millstones, set in the ground, make little dancing floors. And now the full moon, round as a millstone, paler than the cornstooks, comes in at the window. Orion, giant huntsman, glitters in the heavens.

## 6. Variation

ince the scene must have its persons, here, then, is Cinderella, who crossed the floor and swept it before you with a goose's wing.

But her sign or direction is of the Orient, conveying that her's is a subtlety, a delicacy, of more than one facet or surface. It is something little and poignant, which has secrets or appearances that alter and are not the same. There is the normal, the stem, or foliage, and as well, the excessive and fantastic flowering of that. For this is a person of many masks, or disguises. She is a doubled, or deceptive, being, with her own, her true personality, and the many shadows or fictions that are her profession. For this was a dancer, who moved to music, being, as it were, in demi-character, half creation and half interpretation.

We have described this person as being the Orient of the scene and this was borne out in her green and slanting eyes, which could, also, be brown, and in her personal gentleness and fragrance of disposition which called to mind, in simile, the bright clear lights of porcelain, and those words in the old pidgin English of factory or tea warehouse, 'young Hyson, best Kymoon, green Pekoe, finest Gunpowder', together with such adjectives as 'smoky' or 'tarry', or scented with jasmine, with chrysanthemum petals, or even with gardenia. And now, from such beginnings, we transfer her to the earlier, or classical, past of that land, to the pagodas and mountains of T'ang.

The world had white winters and a vernal spring of unfamiliar colours. This was the land of silk, where yellow was the shade of beauty, but the cold months called for snow leopard, for furs that were piebald, that had the hand of snow upon them, that had spottings, or powderings, or were clouded with the white, for the panda, the comedian, the droll of the mountains, seldom seen, concealed in the lofty bamboo groves. Also, this was the land of pheasants; not the peacock, which is Indian and,

## *Satyr Tragopan*

with the elephant, is symbol of India, but the Chinese pheasant. Their King is the satyr tragopan, with horned ears, the ears of a satyr, or of Mephistopheles, and breast of blood-red ruby all flecked with eyes of snow, like the run, the spatial pattern or descent of raindrops upon a window, so regular that they seem as if punctually and meticulously renewed, thrown and spattering, burning like the fire of frost in the incredible, the martial crimson of his chest. Besides, there is the glory of his wattle, a stratagem of colours hidden for the greater time by the softer plumes of his throat and neck and only displayed during his courting. This is an incredible mantling of reds and blues, being of different complication in the case of every individual bird, as though it were his own particular heraldry, and possessing a variety of pattern to which a whole study could be devoted in itself. But, as well, for that was in the far mountains, we must think of the world of men and women, relating this person of whom we are speaking to her environment

So distant and remote is that, we only get, at our beginning, the scent of the jasmine And stranger sounds come in with the crisping of the petals. We go by canal, along the water roads. There are innumerable fishermen, who can count on catching nothing. The country slopes, gently, to the green tea fields. There are pagodas on rocky islands, quincetrees, mulberries, and the lychees growing, like perfumed acorns or pomanders, on their millenary branches. And, now, we have music. Flutes are playing: there are drums and conches. Ox carts, that are painted carriages with awnings, creak past. We come to lotus pools. The rose of their gardens is the paeony, wind blown, and with flowers that hang, thornless, on their broader leaves. The paeony has no wood; there is no rosewood, no gnarling of the stem. It is the lotus on land, of no more substance than the lotus. And they have peach and cherrytree that are, now, in leaf. But the ginkgo climbs in the stone court, high above the galleries. It is as delicate as a treefern, dappled and speckled with somewhat of the planetree, and is their ilex, their lime avenue, being in sign of antiquity and calm, always grown in their temple courts and before their palaces

The ginkgo, to which belong as many images as to the ilex or the cypress, is colour parent, or key motif, to the living men

## *The Ginkgo*

and women of the scene. Their silken dresses and long sleeves are in chromatic scale to paeony and ginkgo. Yellow, rose red, apple green are the colours, or the silk is white, or blanc de chine, for the shadow of the ginkgo, which is a white pallor, a silver white, as if related to the silver pine. Bad taste goes with good taste: those are clouds and dragons in their patterns. And, already, it is metropolitan, the gentlemen wear black hats which are uniform and betoken the town and their officialdom. It is court dress. These philosophers and poets, these calligraphers and painters, are of an age which is so inconceivably remote from our own that there is nothing comparable in distance. Could we speak to them, the names of one or two founders of creeds or religions, of a poet or two, or a philosopher, would be all we had of contact. Also, their pilgrims had been to Himalayan India and India was, to them, the sacred continent from which, even, the wisdom had already faded. Of other knowledge in common there would be none at all. And yet that remote, that intangible past had so close a consanguinity to the aesthetic ideals of our own period that, were closer knowledge of it to be obtained, this might become that classical or golden age of our imagination. The delicate shades, the scruple never to offend the eye but to afford it space and time, without congestion or fermentation of design, all tones being in harmony of gradation, their love of simplicity in line and colour, it is such things that relate the age of T'ang to some part of the aesthetic ideals of our own time. And it is differentiated, it is placed upon the plane of magic, by strangeness and unfamiliarity.

Of this, every step and scent, every sight and sound are eloquent. Their words of one syllable, their curious tones of unction or politeness, even in their footsteps there is the utter distance. Every detail strikes in strangeness upon the eye or ear. And they worshipped a past that was remoter still. This had come down to them in the form of bronze vessels, cauldrons and utensils of sacrifice, affirming by their scale of masculine solidity the heroic age of which they were descended. That might have been the age of dinosaurs, so giant was their scale. They were found in tombs, or buried in the ground, and in theory, might come to light again once in a thousand years all through time, so indestructible was their verdigris'd green bronze. The achievement

## *Rustic Mimes*

of such epical molten images was beyond the power of the more aesthetic T'ang. Their genius lay toward exquisite refinement, towards elimination and omission. This is, in its purest state, a poetical talent. It could only be coeval with an age of poets, for its example, or parallel, is the perpetual sifting and correcting which is the working process of poetry. This was, in effect, the great age of poetry in China. Its values, in aesthetics, were poetical values, as background for poetry, with nothing to disturb that. It is to this perfection of every harmony that we relate that person who was inspiration for the scene, for her values, also, were those of poetry. This was in the absolute proportion of her build, as though mathematically correct, but of a type best suited for the small or intimate theatre, as of a dancer whose genius was for slow movement, for the pose more than for the leap or turn. Her quality was that of poetry, of finish and elimination. We see her in the shadow of the gingko, the delight of an age which would have loved her for her beauty and serenity. The scented embers glow upon the tripod. There is the smell of new grained wood. Birds sing in wicker cages hung from the branches. Even the pigeons have flutes tied to their tail feathers so that the wind has music. Here, in this privacy, the most minute dramas could be enacted, and a subtlety attained that would not be possible in the public theatre. It was the miming of metaphor, folk legends of the fields and groves, courting in the green rye, or by a bank of irises, in a hundred scenes unknown to us, in the nut-tree shade, in the very lotus tank, by the green cassia, the bamboo glade, or below the blue paulownia. There was the language of her wrists and hands, when their words were flowers or butterflies, death's messengers, dark moths, or little images of dying and awakening. But more than all, it is probable, we should have liked the country legends, and, thinking of them, the scene darkens, the blue paulownia dies upon the night. There is not a colour, not a sound. Their past has become antiquity again. That heart beats no longer. And its music, like that memory, is heard no more. We come back from the Orient to walk, again, with rags and bones.

## 7. *The Wandering Sinte*

**F**or, even as we write this, we get the smell of ten thousand camp fires.\* It is the smoke of a tramp's fire, ten thousand times repeated, which, itself, comes from the rags they wear, impregnated by the smoke, tinged, also, by the food they are cooking, everything stolen, even the funguses that no one else dares eat. These come up in a night, after rain, with domes and phalluses that are like an evil Kremlin, a Kitai Gorod, a Tartar city, spawned when only owl and bat and spider are awake. The encampment is in a plain, a stony meadow by the river, a field of bones and rags and refuse heaps. Now, it is black with tents of sacking. The last stragglers arrived at sunset. Their bundles are but just dropped upon the ground.

Certainly there is a magical feeling, or anticipation, in the air. From the town of tents comes a noise which is the clattering of cooking pots and this, in their thousands, is as loud as many kettledrums. And, here and there, deep voices of the Gypsy patriarchs, talking in few syllables to the naked children. These bearded elders might all be sons of one mother, so alike are they, and not one of them, were there light to see, would have a white hair on his head. When Gypsies grow old, they get darker, one sign, so it is thought, of their Indian origin. But you can only see from fire to fire across the acrid smoke. The plain stretches far away, as far as the sunset itself. And the red hot bars of that seem never to grow pale. But the night begins with shade after shade of darkness, as though by successive turnings of a screw. It will not rain, yet. It is hot and sultry, with sudden strange winds blowing out of nowhere.

All is wild and remote, where poet, painter, or musician, have never been. Instead of Spain or Hungary we give you Ursari (bear leaders), Calderari (tinkers or coppersmiths), Lingurarii

\* The historical truth of this scene is the camp, or parliament, of 40,000 Gypsies at Belgrade, in 1867.

## *A Town of Tents*

who live by carving wooden spoons and bowls, and, wildest of all, *Laeši* and *Netoši*. Each group has its chiefs or patriarchs, its *Buljubašas*, who ride on horseback to give themselves authority.\* In this town of tents there may be a hundred or more of these Gypsy Kings. The whole race of their subjects, in all their different sects, are the *Ciganje*, or would call themselves the *Ciganje Rom'njiči*, which means Romanian Gypsies. These older men, grandfathers or patriarchs, are in the likeness of shepherd kings, *Hyksos*, which might well be a word in their own language. Often, in the mode of ancient or savage kings, they have a silver mounted stick, or sceptre, their wand of office, a heavy staff which they carry with them, and which is ever by their side. For the monarchs of the tent have it in their blood to be conspicuous. It is not their pretence to lead an ordinary life. To be stared at is necessary to their profession. Out of rags and tatters they have to create a personality. And this must have its measure of pride and arrogance. But, also, the circumstances of their lives keeps them from the drabness of the slums. In appearance, they are Shepherd Kings, but their Arcadian realm has been transmuted. They have lost their flocks and herds.

Here comes a *Laješ*,† or horsecoper, insolently swaggering, with long hair down to his shoulders. He wears a heavy belt of leather, studded with brass nails, has the trousers of a *Mameluke*, and munches, munches, at a hunk of bread. His long stockwhip is in his other hand. Others, clowns on horseback, come galloping by. Nothing more clownlike than when one of the *Laeši* catches at a pony and jumps upon its back, but he becomes then, immediately, someone magnificent out of the plains. All Asia, Scythia, Tartary, are behind him. The *Laeši*, more than other Gypsies, show their Indian origin. They are fakirs, wantons of religion. When Bacchus invaded India, the *Laeši* will have joined him and been his vanguard, darting like dervishes into the crowd, and, again, campfollowers, stragglers in the dust of his triumph.

Many of them have veiled or hypnotic eyes, set at a slanting angle in their heads. By merely looking at you, or so it is said, a

\* They were allowed to wear the full beard, a sign of nobility, long red mantles, coloured boots, and the Phrygian cap.

† Pronounced *Lacts*, or *Lactsi* in the plural, as, also *Netotsi* for *Netoši*.

## *Romis, or Gypsy Maidens*

Laješ can force you into buying a lame or broken-down horse. As for their physical appearance, like virtuosos they have set themselves apart. They have an indescribable insolence and swagger which are implicit in their very walk, are full of wild jokes that resemble the pleasantries of the executioner, and, the next moment, are making off as fast as they can run, seeing the police, or someone they have cheated. The funny turn in any troupe of acrobats is always, as one might say of music that is in their idiom, in the Gypsy rhythm, this, because of the baggy ill-fitting clothes of the clown, so unsuited to acrobats, but, with that, the more surprising when they prove such agility and daring. In the same way that the black mask of Mezzetin, even in the most delicate paintings by Watteau, is the black face and black beard of the eternal tramp, in the likeness it must be said, of Jackson, the first and only tramp cyclist, so we see the Gypsy in the clown who is an acrobat. But the young men are warrior clowns, actively and potentially dangerous.

And here are Romis, Gypsy maidens, fourteen years old and up to twenty. They have, always, long skirts trailing in the dust and have run after you, begging, in every suburb and banlieu, in the barrio de Santiago and at The Seven Towers. This is because the Romis are ever, and always, the same. There is no need to praise their dark skins and fiery glances. They are on every road, on the outskirts of every town. Some of them are mere children, but carry babies of their own. They belong to every tribe, with heavy necklaces of golden coins, dangling earrings, or no more than a shawl's soiled fringe against their tawny necks, but always, in every movement, are women of their race. They have no home, no country, but come forth, fixed like this in type, from a whitewashed cave, or from a tent of canvas propped upon sticks. They need no mirrors, and own no clothes but those they wear, yet the genius in their blood gives them personality. Along the dusty alameda, or in the lane between the hedges, the coins that are thrown to them are to pay for that, but their own sentiment is disgust or contempt for the gâjos. They will never sell themselves; and have learnt every deceit and trickery, being perpetual outlaws.

They could have come here from the combes and dingles. But, also, and this is more interesting in theory and in fact, from



## *Landscape of Guadix*

the whitewashed caves Aloe, or prickly pear, are their curtains, fences, clotheshorses. It would be Guadix, or the Cuevas de la Vera, both near Granada, and in a landscape that is apocalyptic, and should be sown and tilled by skeletons. We can see those, more than lifesize, leaning on their sickles, met with at some corner of the blood red field, in a lane of the harvest, or, even, sitting in the shade for their siesta meal, by great flagons of wine and flat loaves shaped like a landsknecht's cap.

But the plain is African, in spite of the pomegranate and the orangetree. And the Gitanas are as dark as the Chleuh women of the fondouks. Here, too, they sing and dance, and Flamenco music, as mysterious as themselves in origin, comes more easily to them than the waltzes or boleros of the wine shop. If those are two cave towns, two capitals of the troglodytes, we should think, also, of Triana and the Albaicín, names of music, the one a dusty suburb, but leading, at long distance, to the Sierpes and to the court of orangetrees below the Giralda, the other consisting of the hill of caves opposite to the Alhambra. This race who, when they settle, have always loved to establish themselves in the shadow of some tumbling castle, or even in the very ruins, here, in Granada, have those red walls and towers and their hidden courts of stalactite and filigree always before them, high in the air across the valley. Upon the hill of the Alhambra, night and day, there is music coming from the Albaicín, music which must be heard in breaths and snatches. It is their speech, or vernacular, more than it is melody. Probably it is spoilt, now. We should have stood here thirty or forty years ago, and heard Canario, Cagancho, or Chorrojumo the Gypsy King, in *siguiriyas*, *polos*, *martinetes*. Or in the *saceta*, the arrow of song, intoned as the groups of sculpture are borne past in the Holy Week processions. All that is gone, or nearly gone. Instead, we would have the Gitanos of Almería, living in the ruins of the Alcazaba. Or the Gitanos of Murcia.

This town of tents, which we have pitched in the lost Balkan, has every kind of nomad, but in their old character, for this is long ago. And this capital, this metropolis, has only stood here for a few days. It might move to anywhere to-morrow. But, since it once existed, it can be geographically assigned, for, but for this, it has no positive significance and might be moving,

## *Albaicin*

like the slow shadows on the plain, being a town without streets, or fountains, or the fronts of churches.

Was this their parliament, or the Moldavian horse fair? Have they come here to choose their king? Or are they collected like the flocks of starlings? We would hazard that their whole gathering is instinctive. It is waste of time to dispute the reason. And we must look at them closely, before it is too late. We must allow ourselves the freedom of day as well as night. It is as though in this darkness, which is lit by their fires, we can see them in any light we please. They have come here from every end of the world, of a certainty no contradiction, or impossibility, for their wanderings have taken them much further than we could know. It is nothing for them to return home after ten years, or more, and then, to no fixed point, but only to make enquiry of other wanderers and overtake them, at sunset, somewhere in the plain. But, as well, in addition to those of their race who never cease from journeying, there are others who move according to an established and definite rota, though always of instinct, never written down. Some have settled themselves and, by assimilation, sunk, dully, into the slums of the big towns. Here, however, from Moldavia, they were slaves not long ago,\* except for the wildest of them, the *Netoši*, who move by night and hide themselves by day. We would like to write, just at this period, of Podolia, of its pears and apples and its orchards of black cherries, but that would give no warning of these wanderers, who would be gone by morning. And, of course, in Kiev, they had a suburb of their own. There were Gypsy musicians in cafés, and who would be hired to play in houses. Moscow, too, had its famous singers and violinists, but they and their music, however stimulating or nostalgic, are too sophisticated for our purpose. We return, therefore, to the tents.

Most of these Gypsies, we have said, would call themselves *Čiganje Rom'njiči*. That term is, however, wider in its implications than even the extended limits of the modern country of that name, for it includes the Balkan, old Turkey, and the Ukraine. In all those countries the language of these wanderers

\* The monastery-owned Gypsies in Moldavia were freed by the law of Prince Mihailu Sturza, in 1845, the privately owned Gypsies not till 1855 in Jassy, and 1856 in Bucharest

## *Albaicin*

would include many words and phrases of Romanian origin. Their second language, spoken a little, in some patois, by every one of them, would be Romanian, this, because that country was, for so many centuries, their centre of dissemination. Coming out of Tartary, many hundred years ago, this was their first taste of the West. The natural conditions of Moldavia exactly suited them, while the serfdom to which they were submitted reserved them and, as it were, compelled their increase. It became their native land, to the extent that far-off India and Tartary were forgotten by them. The first syllable in the name of their adopted, or enforced, home land came to be the most important, or key syllable of their own tongue, as though in confusion of their origin and history. From here, they wandered into near-by lands and, having once escaped, were free of the near Orient. From now onwards they could call themselves Turkish, or Russian, or Bulgarian, but in nearly every instance they had come from the Carpathians. In many cases they will have forgotten that language, or will feign not to understand it, but always, in so far as they have any roots at all, that land for many centuries has been their home. It will be noticed, also, that, where their genius for adaptation is concerned, this particular background or origin has not given them opportunity to become anything else than their primitive or rudimentary selves. They have not traversed Europe. They are still on its borders. In Spain, or Hungary, they have coloured the background, but become a part of it. They have taken the Hungarian tunes and played them in their own idiom, adding a frenzy or delirium which was not there before. Music of this sort is both of the Tziganes and of Hungary, not the one without the other. What could be subtracted, or taken away, from it, is its Gypsy manner. Then, the Hungarian would remain. But remove that, and the other would be but ornament and could not stand alone. Against all this the Ciganje, who have no villages, nothing but their tents, and who have not known any other world but this, must appear in what is nearest to their natural element without extraneous influence, or anything but what they are, or were. To what extent, then, are they Romanians? That first syllable, which has always haunted them, moving with them into any country of the world, is, in reality, of little import. These, it would be

## *The Wandering Sinte*

more true to say, are the Ciganje before they became Tziganes, or Gitanos. In this encampment, moreover, all are not Christians. There are many Moslems, not that either religion would be genuine, or of more importance to them than as a base for superstition

What wonders of personality and of appearance surround us upon every side! Here, in the Ciganje town of tents, you are among inspired actors who have been born with a natural gift, or genius, for the picturesque. Their temperament has no other outlet than in interpretation of the rôles of beggar, tinker, thief. This is their only opportunity. But we can walk among the Wandering Sinte. And we must, at the beginning, see with the eyes of men and women who have never lived within four walls. Some of them have been kept in prison. Others have but begged from door to door. The women go up to every stranger to tell his fortune, and push their way across the threshold of the houses. While this happens, the men hawk their copper pots and cauldrons, or sell their wooden spoons or bowls, or lead the dancing bears. Their begging, and it is in this that they are different from other beggars, is always mixed with curses. It is the advantage of their secret tongue, that they can say what they please and none will understand.

Besides the dramatic use made of their tawny looks, the Ciganje have invented the sudden attack. They collect in the outskirts, and then storm the town or village. But they have, also, another and more ingenious stratagem which works according to a different system. It could be described as invasion by infiltration. All day long, from early morning, they work through a village. They are an army of stragglers, with no beginning and no end. The plan is never to appear in sufficient number, or near enough to each other, to rouse the fury of the villagers. Upon such feast days of the rags and tatters the town or village appears as if attacked by a troupe of comedians. It is in this connection that we cannot but name Jacques Callot. But the Wandering Sinte were unknown to him. Long acquaintance with every vagabond and strolling player had given him the power of instantaneous or static rendering of their characteristic movements and gestures. All those who know his *Balli di Sfessania* will agree with this. In little, in not more than an inch or two of

## *The Genius of the Gypsies*

space, he gives us the whole Italian Comedy. His was the epoch of sword and plume. Its rags and tatters, as displayed in the strolling players of his time, have more than an affinity, they are, indeed, in close relation to the Gypsy finery, that is so near to destitution. And a day of ceaseless beggary and insolence would end, often enough, in the forcible punishment or imprisonment of the offenders. They were continually driven out from towns, whipped beyond the parish bounds, or penalized otherwise, and painfully. It was like a revenge upon comedians who have been too funny.

Afterwards, if there was no such retribution, they would gather in the tents. There had to be a share-out of the spoils. The encampment would be some miles away, along a trail made known by the fluttering of rags that had been tied to bushes and to the boughs of trees. Coins would pass from hand to hand. Rags and tins, found thrown away, would be examined carefully, as if to price or put a value upon them. It is a thieves' market among thieves, a 'marché aux puces' among the fleas and vermin. Till long after sunset the stragglers would come in.

This people have nothing of the peasant in them. Their nerves, indeed, have states of feeling which could never be found in men and women who are chained to the soil. For their poverty, which may be more extreme, is not imprisoned in one place. Peasants, it could be argued, are in the same relation to the seasons that the animals are to man, dependent upon them, with no power to alter them, not certain, nor with real knowledge of their masters. But the wandering Gypsies never blame their mode of life. They wander from instinct, which is higher, or lower, reason than stark necessity. They are nomad beings, with a sensuality which is abnormally soothed, or fired, by music. The lion and the serpent love music. Those are not peasant animals, like sheep, or cows, or pigs. This is their difference. And it applies, also, to the Wandering Sinte. The young men, who are spare and thin, might in their trickery and their air of proud disdain belong to the race of the desert lions, while their maidens, are, certainly, the pythoness, the snake goddess who works by enchantment and must not be approached or touched.

Their music is the only art they have, but it is not all the Ciganje who are musical. Many of them have no ear at all. But

## *Start of the Kelipen*

it is magic to them because they do not understand it. Not one of them can read the notes. They cannot explain how it is done, or what it is that they are doing. It is a magical process, and that is all. Also, it is the one art of which there is no visible or outward body. It is carried in the mind, or in the blood, taking up no space, with no weight or substance. And it works by enchantment. It is a finer and more fiery drunkenness, affecting young and old, potent in a breath of time, and dazzling the senses. But the violins are cheap and ill-made; and yet the character of this music is helped by its blocklike notes and by the wailing, scraping of the bows. It is street music, but of the poorest hovels, and, then again, pastoral, but always, by some curious alchemy, conveying even by its bare outline a picture of the background that gave it birth. This faculty, also, has its double or shadowed meanings, in the sense that not only can this be read into, or magnified out of, its sound, but, also, that process is not in exaggeration, for such was the authentic truth of its origin. They are peasant tunes, and it is impossible to decide how much of it is the peasant, and how much the soil. But, at least, it is indigenous, like trees or flowers that are native and grow there to perfection. By that, they give character and become, themselves, the personality. By such is one land recognized and made different from another. But here, in this case, as always with the Ciganje, they are tunes that have been stolen. And the Ciganje have made them of their own.

For the Kelipen has begun. As soon as there is music, that thing which was missing has come back to us. It is a miracle, like the fire of the Epiphany, the feast of tongues. They fly to their cymbals and violins. In one corner, a band of children, of Ciganje boys from five years old to fifteen, play as if inspired. They are at that age when music is inexplicable, when it means everything or nothing, but when its very mysteries are an intoxication. At the first notes of music, some of the younger Laeši get up from the ground and go to look at the horses that were given them in exchange, this morning. This pleases them, and they start imitating castanets by cracking the joints of their fingers, which are always long and charged with electricity. Still uncertain, they begin throwing their hats into the air, and follow this up by strutting about like peacocks. Everyone who is not

## *The Storm of Thunder*

dancing is hammering or banging. So many of them are Calderari, coppersmiths, and their pots or cauldrons lie ready to the hand. The reason for this noise is in their excitement, and as an accompaniment. Their ears hear nothing inappropriate in this din of sound. Its alternative of utter silence comes suddenly and with no warning, like those feelings that communicate themselves, in mystery, among the animals. It runs from heart to heart and stills all other feeling. But the town of tents is too drunk with drink and music to keep silent. Everywhere, in every corner of the encampment, there are individual groups dancing to the cymbals and violins. There are no crowds to watch them, because they are their own audience. All are taking part. It is a miracle that works racially, to the mass, not to the separate person, for the individual, the separate entity, no longer exists, or has to be informed. He knows straightway. This magical intoxication is in touch with all of them, so that it is natural to wonder whether other crowds have ever enjoyed themselves, so universal and wholehearted is their absorption. They are lost in the music. And it has beauties such as other crowds are blind to. It has no religion, nothing of the spirit. It is music, as music, and has no other meaning. It is, therefore, a pleasure or intoxication, a drug on which these human dregs are living. The older men are all drunken, the Hyksos, as we have called them, the Buljubašas, having reached a state of frenzy. The young men stand, swaying in each others arms. At the same moment, the Romnia are dancing in the openings of the tents. Suddenly, the music dies.

Before it finishes, another air is taken up, on one violin only, as if suggestion, and all the others follow it. At first, slow and mournful, as though in lamentation, and then changing in mood. But there is a strange flickering, far down in the sky. For the town of tents is to disappear in fire and water. The first signs of the storm are no more than the flashes in a summer night. They are signals—but in sign or manual of what portent—or are pointless and soundless, but look! again! again! they flare upon the sky. They are messages of our own world, at no great height into the heavens. For we are, indeed, upon the earth. We are born, and die, upon it. The lightnings are its emanation, the surcharge of two vital forces. It is war; or the play of such giant forces that it looks like battle. And, of a sudden, there is wild

### *The Storm of Thunder*

and tremendous lightning, an illumination of the night in the shape of some animal leaping or bounding across the sky. And utter silence. It is forked lightning. Then, once more, that leaping and flashing, followed by the thunder's roar. And rain falling like a storm of hailstones. In a moment the Kelipen has ceased its frenzy. Everyone has run or crawled for shelter. The tents are packed full. It is midnight and noon in one, lit up, violently, again! again! again!







*Book II*

ALBORADA





## I. *Alborada*

**W**e are woken by the ram's horn, blown near to It is the Aubade, or early morning, the Alborada.

It opens like a breath upon the windowpane A dying woman is carried to the window to look out upon the morning. And you must wipe away her dying breath before she looks out on the day. It is her hour of sinking. She is falling, falling Her senses fade from her, they are floating on the winds She is weaker than a puff of air; weaker than the trembling of the leaves. She dies: and slowly, slowly, the pearl-shell window opens in the skies.

The Alborada is distant, or dawn thunder. It is, also, the Aubade, or bird song out of that emptiness. It comes rolling out of the burnt brown hills to become the song, in sleeves of mist, below the window. This is sombre and melancholy, to the guitar, or twanging of the Alborada. It must be harsh and hairy, goatlegged or of the bagpipe It must be apple fanged, tasting and smelling of the apple more of orchard than of vineyard. Apple cheeks are cold, still, from the moonlight, from the dying at the window. They are green, or, like a winter sun, are round and red The grass is still and aching with the dew. It is dead grass; and all day, perhaps, will keep its white deadness untrodden and unfrozen. There is frozen breath, or sighing, on the boughs.

Another world is born This is irrevocable: nothing can alter its decree of light. That burns in all the heavens, from end to end of them. But it is early, the infancy of day. There is an age, yet, before the world of men awakes

It is the new day dawning; but the imagery, the dead sighings of the old yet cling to it. There is no certainty, yet, of shapes. Nothing is tangible Towering fantasies build out of the dew. This misty ocean has its outer Hebrides, rocks of sunset or of sunrise spangling the seas. They are narwhal palaces, the state of Xiphias, double fountains where the whale spouts, the glaucous

## *The Night Dying*

prairies of Leviathan. And, in midst, the dripping arches. It is unreal, but the invention of a dream; their fretted, jagged outline smoothing one asleep with poetry or unexpectedness. Like strokes of the sepia brush, no more than that, they hang upon the void, like the siren rocks, with Capri behind them, along the Sorrentine coast. The barracoon, the Spanish bastion, is no more than a ghost at foot of the tideless waters. Or, dressing in the dark, one could go down the steps and, two hours later, lie off Capri in a rowing boat. The sea would be full of white sails coming out of the night. They were fishermen who worked with the lantern, knocking, knocking, all night long, as in a wood of false starlight. The water had lights in it lifted with the oar; the cliffs had narcissus, and violets that the hands could gather.

Up above, in the orange grove, one could look for the darker leaves and find a tangerine. No one, who has not done this can know the touch of that red rind, its fieriness, and how cool it is to feel. Within, it has a heart of ice. This melts and is nectar, nectar with snow on it, melting down the throat. And, near by, the waxwhite blossom scents the air that its leaves have darkened. Here, then, wandered the thoughts of predilection, feeling for the red gold globes. Day after day burned itself out in great light, but with no heat, for there was snow upon the mountains. Frost lay upon the chestnut leaves: there was white rime upon the ilex and the tangerine. The sky was dove throated: the meridian had no clouds.

But, here, it is a morning in another world. The rocks or crags are Hebridean isles: outer defences, and emptiness beyond them. Or so they seem, these images upon the windowpane. They formed in sleep, a night or two ago, and, now, in this hour of the dying, climb out of the mist. No one could reach to them but fishermen, crackers of the carapace, troglodytes and oarsmen of the coracle. With a sucking noise the tides shrink down the rocks and, as quickly, are swollen up again. But the vision was no more than this, nothing but the bare rocks. The light hardens, it gathers and increases. It kindles, and the train of fire burns into molten brightness and prevails.

This is a magical hour, the night dying and the new born day. It is the hour at which most persons die, and many babes are born. No one, who has heard a child first cry, or seen a woman,

—and the New Born Day

their own mother, dying in this interregnum, could but wonder at the phenomenon of sun and moon, both shining in the same night sky. What can it mean? Or does it portend nothing, to die and be born, night after night, this woman in the firmament being, sometimes, so pale of shell that she shows not at all. But, each morning, the living god, the sun god, climbs, unencumbered into the aether, while the pallid nightshell dies, like a virgin, and burns, pale and bloodless, on the hem of night. Yet, next morning, she will die again. Out in the fathomless distance, in time, for that is the only measure by which to think of it, there must be waxings and wanings that influence us. Now, it is too soon, or too late, for their interpretation.

And so the Aubade, or early morning, the Alborada ends. It opened like a breath upon the windowpane. The dying moonlight looked out upon the morning. And you must wipe away her musty breath. It is her hour of sinking. She is falling, falling. It is four o'clock in the morning. It is the beginning of the new. For it is birth, as well as death. It is death in childbirth. It is night dying in the dawning of the day. It is the dying woman carried to the window, to the pearlshell window opening on the day. This is her dying breath upon the window. It is the mist upon the windowpane. And it must be wiped away before you look out on the morning.

## 2. *Shadow*

**L**et it be August, the ilex month.  
How still it is! Not a leaf is moving Holly and privet  
line the walks—but now the deep wood comes. Here are  
husks or ghosts of bluebells, the corpse of blue hyacinth,  
unburied and rattling its dead bones. To one side, the hanging  
wood falls in soil of leaf mould to a breathless lake.

It is enough, enough. This must be no known solitude.

Come deep into the wood and lose yourselves. For, now, the  
enchantment will begin Who is there who could walk into a  
wood and never listen nor look round? There are so many  
mysteries or silences, so many sighings in the leaves. Think of  
your own youth, which is going, or has gone One has passed  
you with noiseless footfall; or has dropped behind. Who is there,  
that would not weep for this? It is the world, our world, and it  
witheres in a day

And yet, it is only August, the pompous high meridian, the  
Augustan month. The August noon burning on the water. For  
there is the whole day to waste The August noon glittering on  
the waters, the flashing of the oars, when it is too hot to look.  
For we have come here to think of this, away from poverty or  
riches. And who is this first phantom? A tall thin young woman  
in a pellisse of green sheepskin and a wide-brimmed hat, who  
walks between the hedges upon the smother grass. She has long,  
thin hands, and jet black rings and bracelets. She has sloping  
shoulders, and picks her way among the fallen twigs. And from  
her shadow the wood leads on into poetry. For her love is poetry,  
she lives within a phrase. Look at her once more for there will  
never be her like again among women!

This is the world of those who have transcended life, and been  
kept outside it. Of those who will never live again, for they have  
an immortality that is not physical. In this wood, this place of  
waiting, one will not speak to another: all are solitary. Their own

## *A Profile in the Window Pane*

world holds them. For her, the goatfoot waterfalls leap from rock to rock; the reflections in the water of cupolas and gables are the lake, itself, become a Georgian stables; the shadows are man-teaux espagnoles over the long and the light summer land. Her ghost is a personal spectre: but why should I not speak to her? This is my master from whom I learned and there can never be her like again. But look into her features and see their tragic bones, her Dantesque profile in the mirror pane. We wrote in communion with one another and mine will always be the freedom of her world.

But we must open and be less melancholy! For this is the world as it has been, and as it might have been. Let us go quickly to where we breathe its air. Once more we may find that tall thin young woman, lying, this time, under a fruit-tree that is in blossom and reading a book of poetry in the long, lush grass. Or sitting, it may be, in the garden of a London square. The pear tree is in flower and the long grass waves above the page. How lovely to be young and to feel poetry running in your veins! It will be Swinburne or William Morris that she reads: *August*, or *In the Orchard*, from *Poems and Ballads*, *Anactoria*; *Golden Wings*, or *The Blue Closet*. Such are poems of pear or apple blossom to be read in the springtime of one's life. But, as well, the *Fleurs du Mal* darken this paradise, as though with lines of rain. It is poetry of the blood's decline. And her own images begin to form. Metaphors of a bony personality, of hard dry brilliance, nothing soft nor milky, of dogskin leaves and furry buds, of landscapes and persons that have never been before. And then, Ah! then, my world begins to grow. This wood leads on into infinity. I wander in the orange grove and feel the red gold globes. I hear a barrel organ, and know they dance to it. Then, Actaeon, stag antlered, comes out through the trees, we hear the horn of Orion: Krishna dances with the milkmaids: Midas and his men pick cherries, standing on long ladders. Cupid and Campaspe play their game of cards for kisses. Fantasies of the hot South come like tunes from the mind that made them. For, now, it is another world. And we must have the whole earth before it sinks, or burns.



### 3. *Little Benvenuto*

**I**n that same year of the fortune tellers, twenty years ago, a little carriage, a carrozza, drove every day all round the streets of Syracuse. Its occupants were a man and woman, and a child. Nothing remarkable in the older pair, but the child was a little boy of seven or eight years old. In Italy, where children are small, he may have been as much as nine or ten.

This child always stood up in the carriage. Indeed, his father or mother, if they were his parents, held on to him and propped him up. And, by this, his identity was at once known. This was little Benvenuto, the child prodigy, the musical genius who was advertised upon every hoarding of the town. He was in Syracuse for this day only. It was billed as 'unica rappresentazione'. Twice, to-day, it was a Sunday, he was to perform in the one theatre of the town. But we must continue with his person. For the horrifying feature of this apparition was the appalling pallor of the child's face. It was, literally and truly, as white as a linen sheet. The wretched child bowed to left and to right, although there was no question of applause, and hardly of recognition. And the cabman had been told to drive slowly. It was done to rouse curiosity, to attract attention. And would people, we may wonder, be bothered with it in the theatre? Would there not be nearly empty houses?

It was Sunday morning. The café tables were crowded. There was opportunity to study them again, for their carriage came nearly to a standstill. But not a word did the little boy speak. He was thin and dark and very small, dressed in a blue knickerbocker suit, wearing a flower for buttonhole, no hat, long hair, and the flowing tie of the proverbial musician. All as impersonal as if he were an automaton. No trace of expression. As if too tired to speak, but yet making every movement that was required of him. Used to being stared at, not minding the public, whether

## *Little Cupid*

indifferent or bad. But performing all this as naturally, and with as much pathos, as can be had from dressing up a little dog or a rabbit as a human being, a little man, a homunculus, and letting it run about, or eat its meals at a table.

Occasionally, just now and again, his father—if it were his father—spoke or whispered to him. Urging more bows, more effort to attract the audience. Though, by this time, many persons were looking at them. For it was the chief square of Syracuse, and midday on a crowded Sunday morning. Soon, everyone would go indoors for the siesta. After that, it would be time for the performance to begin. It was especially important to appeal to mothers. Women with children of their own, or who had lost their child, were always touched by little Benvenuto. He was half in the world, and half above it, like a child in a painting or a picture book, the good boy of the priests and, as well, an infant genius. Like the child, therefore, of some sinless and etherealized romance, the child of every one of them. And, as well, a little lover in himself, a pathetic ill Cupid, a little messenger of love, since genius comes from heaven and needs not to be explained. A little pale thing sleeping in its coffin, a head upon the pillow, with the curled locks of Lord Byron. Such, the picture, but it is only our surmise. For this was my one experience of little Benvenuto. I did not go, and have ever since regretted it, to see him in the theatre. The rest is conjecture: but we proceed with it. For, unfortunately there were but few women sitting at the cafés. There were far more men: and they were curious, but unimpressed. Many stood up to look, cracked jokes, and sat down again, their curiosity satisfied. In fact, business was not promising. There was the likelihood of many empty seats.

The instrument of little Benvenuto was the pianoforte. The posters announced that he would play a sonata of Beethoven, some Chopin, and pieces by Italian composers with names such as Fumagalli, or Pick-Mangiagalli, salon music of a type that can easily be imagined, with, in their midst, a sacred piece, a 'Preg-hiera alla Madonna (O Santissima Vergine Maria)', finally, waltzes and a fox trot. As well, little Benvenuto, at stated intervals, would improvise upon any theme handed to him by members of the public. This part of the performance must always have been in danger of descending to the ludicrous. His father, but he

## *Repertory*

becomes, now, in the certainty of my imagination, uncle or step-father, sat beside little Benvenuto on a chair upon the stage, near the piano, and was of course all smiles and bows, soliciting the audience to send up their wishes. This moment in the programme was equivalent to those words printed upon menus in the generous Spanish inns, *Hor's d'oeuvres*, or melon, and then *huevos a elegir*, 'any kind of egg you like! It is your choice. You have only to name it!' The audience would be silent. He would try to cajole them, in dumb show, and then by word. 'There is a gentleman over there in the fifth row, with a lady dressed in deep black sitting beside him. He is thinking of something. He has begun to write it down. Thank you, thank you.' And a younger man, sitting at the back, would send up his note, instead. It would be read carefully and, nearly always, with a nod and smile. What obsequious rapture, if a little girl, the age of Benvenuto, would scribble something in her childish hand, just a bar or two of something favourite. It would be received like the news of some heavenly nuptials. And the little bridegroom, with no more ado, would begin his variations.

If this could happen, they were certain of applause. But, sometimes, no one would send up a theme, and then the best course was for the programme to go popular, and more popular. There were Neapolitan songs, older songs, Tosti, or Arditi, there was Puccini, there was light opera and musical comedy, headed by Lehar, of whom a particular song could be heard, at that time, all over Italy. Such music led on, from one thing to another, and in the end there were always encores and particular requests. You could never know. The public were so volatile. It could happen that the worst opening, with absolute indifference towards the sonata of Beethoven, could turn to a complete success. And there had been an evening when they were chased from the stage with hoots and catcalls, and the manager had been rude to them. They had heard laughter, that morning, while they drove round the town. In Syracuse, who could tell? To-morrow, and till Wednesday, they gave their performance in Catania, a huge great city, and birthplace of Bellini. There would be demands for 'Norma', and for 'Puritani'. The audience might be more musical than in Syracuse.

Whence had they come? Probably from Messina, and from

## *Strolling Players*

Reggio, across the straits, the day before. And thinking of that, even from this distant point in time, the picture grows into full potency of success or failure. For little Benvenuto would, by now, be thirty years old. But we come back to him in Syracuse, while they drove round through the narrow streets, save for some small incidents, isolated and to themselves, but contingent to this present.

For there can be other curious sights and experiences of the kind, which make their mark upon the imagination. Not more than a year or two ago, in the Tuscan countryside, an open carriage, not an ox cart, but a gig or a waggonette drawn by horses, came past by the cypresses, in the scent of the bean fields, filled with a group of persons who drew immediate attention to themselves. The men wore black clothes, their faces were powdered, there was a Charlie Chaplin among them, two girls, extremely rouged and painted, sat on the box seat. They were driving from village to village, all the summer, giving their performances. Such is the humblest form of the Italian drama. And, after a year or two, the girls, Colombina or Estrella, will settle down and marry. The men continue in it for much longer. But we are not to imagine that they have great talent. For this procedure is that of the members of comedies or revue companies upon tour, who are to be seen driving, like those actors, or like little Benvenuto, through the streets of French provincial towns, wearing their dresses and their make-up, to advertise the play. That is, always, an interesting and a tragical sight. It is seldom, or never, funny.

But the climax of this drama, for it is over and above, it even encloses its protagonists in a larger and more spectacular tragedy than their own, was to be seen at Marseille, shortly after the last war. This comes from information, and was not personally observed. The whole port, at that time, was crowded with people of all nationalities seeking passage abroad, and many of them stranded for want of money. Among these were an entire circus company. In their necessity, they had parted with everything, animals, props and belongings, even their suits of clothes, keeping only their tights and spangles, as a retreating soldier might sell everything, knapsack and blanket, but retain his rifle and ammunition. Every day, and every evening, they could be seen walking the streets, in the rain and, on more than one occasion, in the snow. Their hurried walk was described to me, hurrying

## *The Stranded Circus*

because it was so cold, which made them appear to be fictitiously busy, as though sent upon an errand, or late for some appointment. They had been at Marseille for weeks, or even months, and, by that time, may have lost all certainty of direction, whether to go on trying to embark, or to start on foot and leave this starvation for further want and hunger on the road. Night after night, these clowns and harlequins walked past the cafés, becoming, in time, for it was known to everyone that they had no work to do, as anomalous as the sight of a man in immaculate riding clothes, where there are no horses, or a yachtsman, with his white cap and telescope, somewhere far from the sea. After a while, no one felt much pity for them.

They became thinner and thinner; and my friend, who is a painter, told me how he prayed for the genius of a Watteau, or better still, a Baudelaire, in order to depict them, more particularly at twilight, in the street, or at the moment when they would come past the full lights of the cafés. They wore their spangled tights, or the clown's robe, which is meant to dazzle, which is full to the knees and sequinned, like the dressing-gowns of fops who drank chocolate in the Augustan age from cups of porcelain. Or they belong, even, to the day of the waspish Valois, the time of mignons and painted faces, but sunk, now, all sunk into the gutter, becoming, daily, more threadbare and more hungry.

In those same tights and spangles they will have eaten from stalls in the slums, and have lain on bare floors in the poorest lodging houses. What poetry, of starvation, in the cold dawn light of January, or February, to see their checks and diamonds staining the grey air! To find harlequin before a square of mirror, or coming down the creaking stairs into the winter morning! Where are they now? We could say, almost with certainty, that it was a Spanish circus, coming from, or going back to, Barcelona. In that city there is a street, or long avenue, of booths and theatres. No one who has seen it can ever forget the spectacle of such poverty and squalor, tricked out, as were the clowns and harlequins, in the old poetry of tradition. This is the fallen beauty, the slum child of the Mediterranean. Its equivalent, in poverty, is to be seen at Valencia and Malaga, at dreadful Oran, at Genoa and Naples, at Palermo and in Syracuse.

Here, for we come back to Syracuse, we see it in a different

## *Harlequin in the Street*

form. But again, it is a larger tragedy, bigger in implication than its own immediate dimensions. It has taken the shape of little Benvenuto, whom we first saw in an open carriage driving round the town. For we have spoken of that, and described his performance. We have given the picture of him, but not of what was in his heart or mind. His musical talent will have been revealed when the child was three, or four, or five years old. From the moment of that recognition there was no peace for him. What had been a game, or toy, turned into drudgery. So inexplicable is the genius for music that his parents may, or equally well may not, have been musicians. If it was his father, or his uncle, or his stepfather, does not matter. This special talent would seem to have as little to do with heredity as with environment. It is as though it attacked, impartially, the weak with the strong, those who are predisposed, and those who ought to be immune. Once it has been diagnosed, and decision taken to encourage and not quash it, the daily hours of work begin. Hour after hour of practising. All other education neglected: nothing but music, morning, noon, and night. One music master after another, or a master who remained, it was all the same. And where will this have been? Whether in Rome, or Naples, or any Italian town, the conditions will not have been different. It is even likely that the parents were, themselves, on tour, and that, after a time, as so much movement was impossible, the child was left to live with his mother. He had already played often enough at concerts and, when a little older, went out on tour. On that occasion in Syracuse he was not upon his earliest travels. Little Benvenuto was already a veteran.

We may think of the humble hotels in which they stayed, all three of them sharing the same bedroom, of the sluts, or slaves of the landing, figures out of nightmares of poverty and hopelessness, who slept in boxlike rooms with no windows, in a nest of pipes and taps, always sewing and mending if there was no other work to do, of the nocturnal noises, lights and motor cars, the hotel being more often than not enclosed in a perfect cocoon of cables and tramlines. And the child, of course, was never put to bed till midnight. There were, as well, the long train journeys, third class. Sooner than spend a whole day in the train, they would travel by night. There would be practice, next day, and

## *Child Prodigies*

the concert in the evening. Their custom of exhibiting little Benvenuto in an open carriage, of showing him, in advance, in order to attract an audience, was the outcome of long theatrical experience. For it was impossible to risk a failure. Just that extra trouble might mean the selling of another row of seats.

Up to this point we have made no attempt to describe the appearance of his parents. Because, in the first place, we cannot remember them. It is so long ago. They can only be recalled both propping him up, holding him forward to be seen. Did they love him? Or were they only out for gain? Not that at best, this could have led to wealth. They were exploiting him. He supported them, and paid for his own lessons. By the end of the tour, there will have been little balance showing. But, of course, the primary tragedy and, as well, the necessity for their treatment of him, lay in the usual history of prodigies. There is no need to stress that, for its truths would be redundant. It was important to take the money while his talent lasted.

The first thing noticed about him on that morning in Syracuse was his dreadful pallor. There is a superstition that this is in sign of genius, but it is more certain that it means ill health. We know that so many prodigies grow up to be unremarkable, the others die young. It is a perpetual risk, a game of chance with all the odds against survival, either in the one form or the other. This would mean, to any fond parent, a perpetual anxiety, a dread lest the miracle should cease. If you, yourself, the parent, are talented it is a miracle if the child inherits that, while the sudden appearance of talent in the child of an ordinary person is something not less wonderful. As is well known, such exceptional children are usually born to parents one of whom has been unsuccessful in that particular direction in which the child shows talent. In such forms, it is equivalent to a ghost brought to life, and it cannot be too tenderly treated lest it fade away.

If we allow to little Benvenuto the stock or average parents of the piece, it would probably be unfair to their memory to suggest that they considered him more in the light of a little acrobat, a little child who turned cartwheels, or could do card tricks, than as a person who, in his lifetime, might add to the world and leave it richer when he died. Other parents, and perhaps his own, have wished that their prodigy was a Lilliputian, a little midget

## *Compared with Midgets*

dwarf who could be with them always and would not develop and live in the world. It is parents of ordinary stature who have dwarf children. For that, too, is a chance; a lucky chance; if you see it in that way. Midgets can live into old age and, themselves, have children of normal size, so long as they are the midget type, the miniature man or woman. The other sort are childless. Those are the dwarfs who are hydrocephalous, or swollen headed. As for the midgets, they are vain and jealous, they fall violently in love, generally with persons of normal height, but, if married to another midget, the wife will often die in childbirth, so anxious are they to show that they are normal, and so dangerous and delicate is their chain of life. How odd! (we say this in parenthesis) odder than what we were told of the harlequins of Marseille or Barcelona, to see the midgets of the theatre in their lodgings, living three or four in a bedroom, and watch them climb on chairs to look into the mirror, hear them talking in their falsetto voices! To be born a midget is to want less of everything than other people, and to be certain of a living. No one would, however, mistake Benvenuto for a midget. He was, too evidently, growing out of his clothes. You could see that when he stood up in the carriage.

But, again, we are neglecting what was in his heart or mind. Such little prodigies must be compound of weariness and of affection. For they are, indeed, from Lilliput, and their lives will be more difficult as they get taller. Their candle is burning from its wrong end. This very year, this month, may be the climax of their powers. A world famous violinist who, when nine years old, played the violin concerto of Brahms at a concert with the composer present, has told me that, at the age of nine or ten, he was more perfect in his art than at any other period since. It is true, of course, that the violin in this sense is a more dangerous, because more limited, instrument than the piano. Many prodigy violinists must know the entire repertory while they are still children. And, if they are not composers, there is nothing more to come. Less than that, indeed, if their powers are in diminishment. But, in every case, whatever the instrument, whether it is a child composer, a child actor, or any other form of child prodigy, it is present time which is dangerous and crucial. It must, indeed, be curious, having become a nonentity, a teacher of music, an



## *Genius, and How it Departs*

accompanist, a church organist, having embarked, even, upon some entirely different profession, to pass by the theatre or concert hall where years ago, in childhood, you played when you were a genius. Feats which were only remarkable because you were a child, but which can be performed adequately, if not well, by any number of adult persons. It must be a situation comparable to the discovering of a magical formula, an elixir of growth, which would bring the dwarfs and Lilliputians of whom we were thinking to normal stature, removing, at once, the burden of their freakishness and their livelihood or profession. They are normal, now. No one need pity them, or feel sorry for them. They have been given their wish. And, now that they have it, before long it will turn bitter. The prodigy, though, in looking at the theatre or concert hall, can have few regrets. He must have been the first to feel it failing in him. You get so far: and then you get no further. You can not always be lying in your mother's arms, be put into a lace collar, and be held up in a carriage for the crowd to see. If you, yourself, had this unenviable but pathetic talent, would you not long for the past, before it was discovered in you, or look forward to the time when it is forgotten and you are a normal being. There is this chance, which they do not have in Lilliput.

The progress of little Benvenuto round the cobbled streets of Syracuse, past churches and palaces that none of them would notice, turns into a symbol and an historical analogy. Both in its moment, and in retrospect. In effect, they are for ever driving round the narrow streets. And not only of Syracuse, but of every other town. There is always their equivalent, every now and again. But what a curious sight to see! Some morning in another town, no matter where, they will drive past again. And it would be better to look closely, but not buy a ticket for the concert. For this is the infant Mozart: or the husk or shell out of which he thrust his wings. And those who wish to know more of it may read the life of any virtuoso. It is a part of universal experience, just as the one instance in a million in which it is a genius, such as that we named, is a part of everyone's inheritance and belongs to the whole world. More, even, than to the person or vessel in whom it rested for a time. This would sound as though it were never extinguished, but moved from soul to soul looking for a

## *The Fanfare Again*

home and killing, nearly always, or quite exhausting, the heart and body of its receptacle

What can their music mean to them! It is the horror of their situation that it must so often, and so quickly, lose all meaning. For what, indeed, is a grand piano? A black and white keyboard, with analogy to the bézique marker, and to the game of dominos. But the painter has his paints and brushes, the writer, his pens and ink and blotting-paper. And human beings, for that matter, are but flesh and blood. Buildings but bricks and mortar. All things on earth are but alive or dead. And so it is until the new meaning dawns. It is a drama within four walls, an interior life of paints and brushes, of pens and paper, of the black and white notes. And the change can come upon them, just as wine is made from grapes. Their truths of black or white, bread and water, life or death, become transcendental, and take on higher values. More than this, it is communicable and a contagion. It speaks from soul to soul, not in creation, but in understanding. This is the Epiphany, the feast of tongues, but, another day, it is understood by none, and has been spoken to deaf ears.

We must suppose that, did we know, or were it possible to enquire, there would be no news of little Benvenuto. By now, if still alive, he will be thirty years old, and no one will have heard of him. This was upon a Sunday morning in Syracuse, but, as we have shown, it is of no importance where it was. It could be the town of Syracuse in the U.S.A., Memphis, Tennessee, or anywhere else. It is the truths that count, and not the time or place. For this incident, which is one of those peculiar things that stand out in the memory, is symptom of so much that perishes, or becomes stultified. It should not be allowed, for it is a sacrilege and a degradation. And, at the thought of that, once more this true ghost story achieves itself. We see a carriage, halted in the crowd; but, of a sudden, there are the notes of a trumpet. Everyone in the square turns round and looks towards it. It is the bugle call, the ghostly fanfare from Granada, from the Castillo di Bibataubin, come back for no reason, but as the echo or allusion to a theme in music. What is it, but another lost soul? And it dies back again into the February morning.



*Book III*  
OF PERFECTION IN LITTLE





## *Of Perfection in Little*

**B**ut now, from the Alborada and from that ghostly resuscitation, we come into a world of plenty. This is the true paradise of little things that have not fulfilled or overstepped themselves, of little things that can be held in the hand and studied, of the lesser known where all has not been said. Great men have brought the end of the world, their world and our world, too near to us. And now, advance will come, not from the airman's cabin, but from the hermit's cell, or the lone body. We must have before our eyes the picture of calm and contentment, for that is unknown and has the magic of the new. Some persons have known it in childhood, and never found it since. It may come later for an hour or for a day, but always the wind is blowing. There is evil in the air. No one knows which way to turn, or what to work for. None have beliefs outside the world, and none within it, except for war or gain. A Quaker settlement with its trim houses and little gardens is more inspiring, now the world has come to this, than Siena, Toledo, or all that was beautiful in Italy or Spain. So, at first, let us look for this, and then, from places move to persons.

Dissent, disagreement, come again into perspective. No longer are those individuals to be admired who go to the ends of the earth for money. In their place we would extol the Quaker, the Moravian, almost the Mormon, communities who sought out the distance as a place of liberty. Tragically enough they brought their disabilities along with them their inhibitions, and their servitude to the fear of sin. They lived in prisons of their own making. There, they were persuaded, they would know the balmy scents of freedom.

That it was a paradise, in little, all must acknowledge who have seen or read of Herrnhut, the original colony of the Moravians in Saxony, the primitive, as we might call it, of the long line of such religious communities. We take this for a first example

## *Moravians*

because of its exceeding neatness and beauty. It is a pattern for what can be achieved by humility and orderliness. And now we must speak, in the space of a sentence or two, of the Moravians themselves. The community is called Herrnhut, i.e. 'The Lord's Watch', from a passage in the eighty-fourth Psalm—'to watch the door in the house of my God'. The Moravians had fled to this place, in 1722, from their earlier settlements in Hungary and Bohemia, for they are Hussites, or early Protestants, who profess the doctrines of the Confession of Augsburg. Their origins, in fact, are in the late fifteenth century. They took refuge at Herrnhut from the persecution of the Jesuits in Bohemia, and were given land and hospitality by Count Zinzendorf, upon whose estate they built their village. It consists of neat rows of little houses, or cottages, in fact, an embryonic garden city. Quickly enough the vision can be conjured up of that pristine cleanliness and order. The first Moravians, so we are told, bore some resemblance to the Quakers, especially in the plainness of their dress, but differed from them in their love for music and their toleration of dancing. The costume of their women was distinguished by variously coloured ribbons. The girls wore deep red, unmarried women, pink, married, blue, and widows, grey or white. An importance, as of details seen under the microscope, attached itself to all the minutiae of domestic life. For this was a community as much separated and withdrawn from the world as if its whole activities were confined to some little island in the sea. We may remind ourselves, in this vein, of the exact specimens of the sort to be found on the islands and in the fishing villages of the Zuyder Zee, in Volendam, Marken, and on the isle of Urk, but we refer back to a time, perhaps sixty years ago, before those places had become the comic theme of caricaturists. Now, in fact, those villages are in danger of total extinction owing to the draining of that inland sea, which must, in the end, altogether remove their means of livelihood.

On the isle of Marken, and at Hindeloopen on the far coast of the Zuyder Zee, a fantastic costume had been evolved which must have been influenced by tales brought home by mariners from the East. Stories of Java, Sumatra, and Celebes must have parented the queerness of this strange attire. It is a free fantasia upon the Indian theme. The printed cottons or the batiks of those

## *Fishing Villages*

lands had been combined into this wholly imaginary variation. Its only resemblance is to the painted figures upon lacquer, or upon cups and saucers of early Meissen. With these, indeed, the consanguinity is most clearly marked. It extends not only to the patterns of their dresses but is manifest to an almost ridiculous extent in the tobacco pipe which fantasy ascribed to the Chinaman and that had become his indispensable idiosyncrasy to the Dutchman. The painter, at Meissen, to whom these bizarre inventions are due was J. G. Herold, but his sources, or, indeed, in a parallel sense, the confirmation of these sailors' tales as told to the island fishermen, are to be found in a famous Dutch book of travels by Nieuhof, translated into English, in 1669, by John Ogilby, as Nieuhof's *Embassy to the Grand Tartar Cham*. This work has hundreds of copperplate engravings in which the scenes are entire fictions of the imagination.\*

We see the curious results of this intoxication by the Orient in the costumes and the painted wooden furniture of those Dutch villages of which we are speaking. They were as profoundly influenced by these travellers' tales as by the scriptures that they so assiduously re-read. It comes, also, as an odd reinforcement to

\* Such another source for these living verities are the splendid and imaginative fantasies of Romeyne de Hooge to *Les Indes Orientales et Occidentales* (1680), a work that, in the uncertainty of its title, is the exact reflection of the poetical haze or distance in which it dwelt. India, to the British mind, means Hindustan, but it is to be remembered that the Dutch always refer to their Eastern Empire as the Indies. Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Bali, Celebes and the Moluccas are so included, as far as Papua. This gives a new interpretation to a poetic theme. This may be studied to advantage in the old Dutch charts and maps and, more particularly, in those of Pieter Goos. We would mention the *Zee Atlas of the Water World* (Amsterdam, 1666), with its colouring and illumination in gold. His Portolan charts, printed upon whole skins of vellum, have huge engravings on their borders containing hundreds of Oriental figures, heightened with gold and hand coloured. The East Indian islands are portrayed with especial accuracy. The maps and charts of Pieter Goos are marvels of minuteness, starting off from Holland and the Zuyder Zee, in a perspective all their own, as though England and the English Channel were, literally, to be seen lying to the south-west of Holland, and then proceeding, day by day, for several months on end, into the magic Indies. Such treasures have been, far too long, in the keeping of geographers. They belong to the great world of art, where minute accuracy is combined with imagination. There is a fair collection of these old Dutch charts and atlases in the map room of the British Museum, others are in the possession of the Aardrijkskundig Genootschap at Amsterdam, and many were exhibited at the Exposition of the International Congress of Geography at Amsterdam in 1938.



## *Fishing Villages*

our theory to find that the 'chinoiserie' phase of Meissen china, as directed by J. G. Herold, was succeeded by what is called the 'harbour scene' style in which a new 'chinoiserie' intensity was evolved from scenes upon harbour wharves. The Dutch fishermen in their fur caps appear in this, and these new fantasies centre entirely upon the life of the harbour. The fishermen with their tobacco pipes, the rigging of the ships, the mooring posts and unloaded bales and barrels, and, in the background, the low scenery of the Dutch polders, it is from such images that the style is formed. There is, in fact, a connection in imagery between these archaic Dutchmen of the Zuyder Zee villages and the 'Indes Orientales et Occidentales' of the imagination. But the interest of this has led us away from the direct imputations of our theory. We have to stress the strict island characteristics of these little communities. These fishermen have become a species in the true botanical or ornithological sense of the term, with an altogether separate species dwelling, it may be, within a few miles of them. The population of Marken, for instance, are Protestant by religion and could never, therefore, take in marriage the Catholics of Volendam, the nearest village, but a mile or two away upon the mainland. But in Marken, and upon the bucolic isle of Urk, this latter sundered from the mainland by some fifteen or twenty miles of open sea, the differences, in exaggeration upon those we noticed among the Moravians, have seized upon the subject of family mourning as their opportunity. The full period of this, when worn for a parent, extended to no less than seven years, and its gradations and its declining force were marked by the most minute regulations. No one in the whole population could expect to remain for long outside its rules. Many persons must have passed the greater part of their lives in its trammels. In Hindeloopen there were seven recognized gradations of mourning, ranging from dead black through dark blue, with a thin white line, to white with a blue line. But mourning was interpreted in a liberal sense. It did not mean plain black. Their mourning was more to be compared to the different degrees of regimental full dress. And, like botanical or ornithological specimens, again, a marked degree of physical similarity had been attained. One inhabitant, male or female, closely resembled another.

## *Fishing Villages*

No scene, though it has become trite and familiar through repetition, could be more peculiar than the isle of Marken, more especially at the back of the island, away from the harbour front. Here the green plain, or goose meadow, stretches into infinity, which may mean a mile, or nearly a mile, but it appears to have no end. The wooden houses and their bright interiors, gay as the inside of a barge or of a Gypsy caravan, are meticulously clean. Any human beings in sight wear the village costume, a dress which is pushed beyond the borders of probability, until it has become almost insane in its strangeness. The whole community have conspired together in this contagious madness, a work that has been facilitated by inter-marriage and inbreeding. The restrictions upon their lives are nearly equivalent to those governing the colony of penguins in the Zoological Gardens. It is all but impossible for them to move away from home. They are in dissent, or separation, from the world at large.

We find our imagination drawn to the thought of a Sunday morning, fifty or a hundred years ago, in this peculiar place. A winter morning of fine sun, but not a ripple of the oars, for, on Sunday, the boats are idle. No movement was allowed. Where else, in the Western world, was more remote than this? The inhabitants are in their Sunday best. Those printed, padded cottons; those houses like a barge, or like a circus tent; these give their obsession with the Orient. Each child is the Infanta in a fairy tale, the living instance of its own improbability. Their world was flat water and the green goose plain. Its emptiness, its lack of incident, explain and give the reason for their hallucination. Their stolid temperament is frantically circumspect, careful to the point of frenzy. The thatched roofs are as finely combed as a fringe of hair. Paint is scrubbed and varnished to the light of metal. Or think of the foggy winter, or of a Sunday, dead with snow. There are villages more remote, yet more lost in the bucolic distance. Villages in Walcheren, Beveland and Goeree, in Schouwen, all islands of Zeeland, the province which is level with the sea, or lower.

Here, the dairy fields are only ended by the dykes. They would, but for that, stretch on and on for ever. This is the land of cheeses and the milk pail. A pair of milk pails on a wooden yoke, the clatter of wooden sabots on paths of bright red brick, this is the

## *Avercamp*

life of the market towns. In winter, when skates and sledges were in use, there was the winter carnival or kermesse, as it can be seen in the paintings of Avercamp. The boors are merrymaking upon the ice. The remoteness of this winter kermesse is given by Avercamp in unrelenting detail. It may, even, be this especial or particular seclusion, as if his subjects were lost in their bucolic, snowbound world, that makes this painter, whose dates are given as 1585-1663, appear to belong to a century earlier than his own. He is less vigorous than Pieter Brueghel. His figures are smaller, less vulgar, less of the peasant. There are always coxcombs, young men in ruffs and feathered hats, at the kermesse. Often, for deeper probability to the unreal scene, the winter afternoon is bright enough to see the steeple of the next village, and its villagers at their own kermesse in the distance. But no one goes towards them. They are in a separate world, a mile or two away. Fires have been lit upon the ice. An ox is roasting. This is no Sunday, for they are playing games. This makes the crowd of boors into a shape of rings, or circles. They are drinking mulled beer or wine and have begun to slip and tumble. All static objects have a hard crust of snow upon them. And the snowflakes are falling again. The sun is setting. Everything that happens contrives to remove the kermesse further and further into remoteness. It is time to go indoors.

We turn, now, from the Boors of the Dutch Polders, to the Puritans. Those persons whom we may think fortunate in their exile, whether it is true in fact and took them to another continent, or whether they lived at no greater distance than in a village of their own, in a dale, or on the fells, had the inner contentment and the growth that we must envy. They knew prosperity in little things. They made their lives a pattern and fulfilled its shape. Their dress and manners kept them apart from other men. The most beautiful setting for their quiet virtues is to be found wherever there has been a Quaker settlement. Probably the best instances of this occur in Ireland. The old town of Limerick can give the picture of that past; while in proof that these were universal virtues of exile or emigration, and not only to be found among the Quakers, there are the rows of neat houses with their infinitely varied doorways, at Portarlington, in Queen's County, where the Earl of Galway settled a colony

## *Quaker Settlement*

of Huguenots in the reign of William III. The settlers were French or Flemish in origin, being of exactly that stock which produced the great Huguenot silversmiths of London, Paul Lamerie, Crispin, the Courtaulds, and others. It seems never to have been explained why the Huguenot craftsmen produced so many great silversmiths at this time and during the eighteenth century. The probability is that persecution had driven them into certain restricted professions. In the course of time great hereditary skill would be thus acquired. A particular aptitude is then developed. This, too, must be the history, for over two thousand years, of moneylending, where the Jews are concerned. But even in the space of two or three generations, the Puritan and the Quaker had forced their characteristics into flower. Their rigid mode of living ensured, perhaps, so far as is possible among human beings, the reproduction of the same traits of character in every succeeding generation. They became—and they would have remained, had persecution continued—as it were, a separate race, almost with their own ethical peculiarities. These had been developed in self-defence as a protection and, also, in order to bind still closer their ties of inter-relationship. In this instance the subconscious impulse will have been added to the conscious wish. All their forces were working for these ends. Their sobriety in all things put a superfluity at their command which came from the saving of their energies. They never drank, nor danced; they dressed plainly and worked six days a week. This may have represented an advantage of ten or twenty per cent over their fellow men. The element of pocket money, to be spent upon drink or games, was altogether absent from their lives. They were like a monastic order, only with actual celibacy relaxed so that they could increase their number and perpetuate themselves.

If we think of them in prosperity by the green flats of the Shannon they are to be envied to more advantage in Massachusetts, or in Maine. Down the eastern coast of America, as far as Florida, they made a little Europe. This they copied in its virtues, in its thrifts and liberties, but not its wars. Freedom of belief they could not have. This was the price they paid for peace. Their conscience was in chains, but their lives were as they willed. This early part of American history is taught to all Americans, but is not known here. We never think of the five or six genera-

## *The Black Hood of Mostar*

tions living in America who wore those Puritan clothes best known to ourselves in Hogarth's plates for *Hudibras*. We can see them, in that, transferring them to the new brick houses of Boston, or Salem, peopling the quiet streets with the broadcloth and the black beaver hats that were so deep an expression, in visual form, of the Puritan. An enforced absence of decoration enhanced the importance of this somewhat solemn and forbidding line. It will have lent weight and emphasis to their gravity. At the same time, it must have made the bright ribbons of the girls and young children, the flowers in the gardens and the windowboxes, into something of a heavenly dispensation. Perhaps golden hair can never have been seen to such advantage as with those formal clothes of modesty and prudence. And a girl with raven hair and blue eyes could make the witch's steeple hat into a new world of unknown lore and beauty. The Puritan stillness, in exaggeration of incident and detail, must have made an entity as quickly to be known and recognized as cross-legged indolence in old Turkey, or the impassivity of the Buddhist. Such static qualities were still further enhanced in the case of the Quaker. This community, in the course of time, had evolved into what could be described as a free fantasia upon their original aloofness and independence. Garments were worn which removed them altogether from the contemporary world in which they lived. This was done in order to make them uniform and regular for seclusion. But exaggeration had crept in, even into what were designed to be weeds of humility and peace. Bonnets appeared which were as stilted and far-fetched in conception as that most extreme of all headgear the black hoods worn, in Mostar, by the Moslem women of Herzegovina. One Quaker bonnet, in particular, invented about 1790 and called after the name of what one might be tempted to term its preceptor, exceeds anything that has ever been imagined as the symbol of moral defence or fortification. It, therefore, must have drawn attention to itself in no uncertain manner. It is, almost, a florid advertisement for those very qualities that the Quakers had asserted themselves to hide. Away from England, and in that distant scene, surrounded, as they were, by a majority of persons who had come to America because of their religious nonconformity, there can have been little, or no, restraining force upon the self-dramatization of each



THE HOODED WOMAN OF MOSTAR



## *New England*

separate sect. There may, even, have come a sense of rivalry, for it is only fair to admit that there can have been little else to interest an active intelligence. The chapel was theatre, cinema, and dance hall, all in one. No other recreation was tolerated. The chapel service was the only popular festival in which all took part. The members of other religious denominations were looked upon as though they belonged to another nationality. Social intercourse was impossible between them. Many persons, even now, can remember the prejudice felt against Roman Catholics in strict Anglican circles and the way in which they were mentioned as though they were to be both pitied and avoided. If this was the rule in England, not so long ago, how much more will it have been true of a bucolic land, thousands of miles away across the Atlantic, where the whole country was a colony of sects. Religious differences were the reason for which these settlements had been called into being. Nonconformity was the prime interest of their lives and, between the various divisions of Nonconformity, there will have been insuperable barriers that no tolerance could break down. It may be impossible for a present-day mind to understand how obstinate and unyielding was this insistence upon the minuter forms of sectarianism. Only in the stress upon its distance and remoteness from Europe, and in the realization that it was precisely for this purpose that they had come here, can its profundity be known. This, more than any livelihood or profession, was the passing of their days. In the same way that, in the case of Cistercian or Cluniac monks, their working in the fields or even their architectural labours upon the church or the conventual buildings took but a second place compared with the daily hours of prayer and meditation that were their real vocation, so, with Puritan or Quaker, trade or commerce were but the means of daily bread. They must work to keep from idleness. Their real profession lay in prayer and in preparation for the life that was to come. Unlike the monks, they must not beautify the vessel of their prayers. Their excess of energy, and the riches that they had gathered, remained unspent. Their extreme nervous complacency, and the unrest that was suppressed behind it, found an outlet in parochial rivalries but, as well, in exacerbated neatness and precision of appearance. It is this that we would bring into prominence in our picture. It is



## *New England*

stippled or chequered in the sharpness of all its edges. As we have said, a girl's silk ribbons, against this sober background, had a brightness that was incomparable. A mere wrist and sleeve could give as much pleasure as the brushwork of Velasquez. There will have been exquisite delight in brown or black clothes against a whitewashed wall. We must remember, too, the quilting on which the Puritan women spent their leisure. It has been written, also, that some of the most expert gardeners there have ever been were the Quaker ladies. They were cut off from so many of the ordinary activities of life that they had the time and energy to devote themselves to flowers. We must think of them as growing pinks or auriculas whose painted petals put them into a gayer world than the actuality they knew themselves. It would seem to be almost certain that in eastern America, as in Ireland, some of the most beautiful and intricate of old florists' flowers have been preserved entirely owing to the interest taken in them by Quaker women. Such were the courts or cloisters of their convent, for, as we have said, the Puritan or Quaker community had the regularity, and much of the austerity of monastic life. Such were the ornaments of their *clausura*, for they were allowed none other.

And, in conclusion, there was for near background that inconceivable immensity which is the prime difference between their day and our's. The possibilities were so enormous that it was not worth while to think of them. Until the end of the eighteenth century the colonists, perhaps two or three hundred thousand in number, inhabited lands already far greater in area than the whole extent of the British Isles. Only an individual, here and there, can have had any idea of the distance separating him from the Pacific Ocean at the far side of the Continent. It was as far away as the coasts of England; but even the longest voyage by sea, in company with all its hardships and terrors, was nothing by comparison with a theoretical journey across the American continent, from sea to sea. Also, in early days, it was as unprofitable as to explore the upper air. No discovery, however fabulous the wealth of it, if situated in the far interior of the continent, could have ended but with the death of nearly everyone concerned. The Spaniards, when they conquered Mexico, or Peru, were dealing with distances that were

## *The Claddagh of Galway*

infinitely smaller. Their difficulties, even, were more vertical than horizontal. Peru or Bolivia, in this sense, are nearly as inaccessible as Tibet; but the actual distances, in terms of miles, would be unimpressive. Peru or Bolivia, from Virginia or Maine, were as distant as if upon another star. It must have been literally incredible to think that there was a land connection between these hills and green fields of Virginia or Maine, and the cactus land with its plume clad caciques.



But this fantasy, born, in the first place, of the sand dunes, spreads its contagion and will not stand alone. It must find a parallel in the living world before our eyes. It is no longer the level sands but a wide bay set with mountains. The air is lively with their colour, in greens and blues that are unreal they are so soft and clear, yet there is a sadness upon the waters which is the emanation of this far-off land.

Again, there is the mewing of many gulls, voicing the silence and the loneliness. The bay is so wide that its far shores are hopelessly distant, and more beautiful for that. This pier, for it is a harbour town, would be a place to walk upon, day after day, thinking of ambitions that will never be realized. Poverty and sadness are endemic in this air, but its beauties are of the shawl and not the silken dress. The bare feet of the women tread soundlessly upon the quays. And they are all alike, as alike as a flock of birds. Their heads are bound up in a handkerchief or shawl, and they wear a red petticoat or bodygown, which is no more than a short red skirt.

This is the dress of the town. It is the Claddagh, the fishing town of Galway. The men have put to sea and only the women are left, but their number and the peculiarity of their dress give to the streets and quays the air of a foreign town. It is the suggestion of a world that is beyond experience, for this is the only hint at its existence and even the shadow of it is to be found nowhere else. If the world went out far into the West it would be this. Such is the Occident or far West of the world: but its unique character cannot be seen even on the near shore of the same island. Here, at the gates of Galway, it begins and is con-

## *The Claddagh of Galway*

tinued on the rocky coasts and on a few islands in the ocean. As for the Claddagh, until a year or two ago, it was the metropolis of the women of red skirts. Low whitewashed houses of one storey, with roofs of black thatch, built with no system and numbered without a plan, were inhabited by many hundreds of these intermarried families. They were ruled by their tribal laws and no stranger lived within their walls. It was the Albatcin or Triana of the fishermen. Now, the Irish, having achieved their independence, have pulled the Claddagh down, building in its place a Nottinghamshire mining village. Not more than a cottage or two of the Claddagh has been left standing. This unique thing has gone irrevocably, for nothing. The rookery has been pulled down, and soon the rooks will go.

Galway's wide bay opening on America is the start of the Gaeltacht. No tongue but Erse is spoken. The country runs to wild and fantastic mountains; the Twelve Pins of Connemara break, and are jagged on the limpid sky. Hopeless, but tremendous, the bog trembles its quaking sides, and advances on the land. In every village the cabins stand far apart, at a stone's throw; and the white stones, lifted laboriously from the soil, are piled into rough walls that mark no division of property but only keep the ground clear for the goats, or the potato patch.

On every hand there are mountains, on land and in the sea. Out in the bay, the Aran Islands, three in number, close the Ocean. They are utterly improbable, mere islands of the imagination, treeless, walled with loose stones, isles for the corrach and the pampootie, boats of skin and shoes of skin, for high seas and for paths of limestone rocks. The fishermen, dressed in homespun cloth, gabble in Erse, on these shores of Thule. Behind, the wonderful mountains roll and break upon the air. But, beyond the islands, there is nothing.

★       ★       ★

Far into the south the same Atlantic rolls its waves upon another shore. If you come to it from inland the hills of sand hide the sea from view. There are pinewoods, and the soil of sand is pinned down by white flowers and by red flowers, by rosettes, lotuslike in shape, but with leaves that are not leaves



FISHING BOATS OF NAZARET



## *Nazaret*

but cactus spines, three sided, not leafy in their texture but marrowy and water filled, the mesembryanthemum. White with black anthers, or roselike red, the rock cistus grows. The wind sighs in the pinewood and smells of that. But, now, you hear the waves. There are white houses and a saltwhite strand. The long road leads to the foreshore

Its corner is pandemonium let loose. The fishermen of Nazaret run in their loose trousers and surround you. They are barefoot, and their trousers are tramps' trousers, the trousers of tramp cyclists. Coat, shirt, and trousers, are no two of them alike. All are in check patterns, red and blues and yellows, all barred in black. They wear the knitted stocking cap of the tarantella dancer. But their women are statues, never moving, robed in black. They sit, motionless, their faces hidden, their heads shawled in black cloth over the flat hat of the water carrier, made level for the amphora. From one hour to another they will never move. They do not speak, but are veiled nuns vowed to silence. The fishingnets, the floats and corks, all the harbour imagery, lie round them.

But the fishermen of Nazaret have boats which transcend their men and women in improbability. These are square and flat-bottomed at the stern, then narrow their short bodies to a high arched prow. The wood is painted in bright patterns, in blacks and whites and reds, so that nothing is more curious than the sardine boats of Nazaret, ashore, hauled from the sea, or launching on the waves. They are tended by the fishermen in their black caps and the hundred squares and barrings of their checks, and by the black cowed women, woken into life, now, and working with the men. Or the boats lift and fall, near to shore, upon the swell, clumsy but unsinkable.

Everything is odd in this little town so near to the sands. Its alleys of white houses are mere windowless cubes, even the features of its men and women are in marked difference from those of the real Portugal. In theory it is a Phoenician settlement, and there is support to be found for this in their Semitic appearance and in the shape and pattern of their boats. \* Higher up the

\* There would seem to be visual evidence that is beyond contradiction of the Phoenician origin of this Portuguese fishing population, along the Atlantic coast from Nazaret to just south of Oporto. Their Semitic type is most

## *Envoi*

coast, in the salt water lagoons of Aveiro, the boats with loads of seaweed, carrying salt or merchandise, or sailing to the fishing grounds—the ‘esguichos’ shaped like a sickle or a half-moon balancing on the waters, the ‘molicieros’ with prows like a swan’s neck riding the lulled mirror—these are no less curious than the boats of Nazaret, but their occupants, at least, are the ordinary fishermen of Portugal. They are not alien to the peasants and the townsmen. Their features are in harmony with others of their race.



The nostalgia of all such places is because not one of us could bear to live in them. They are curious and beautiful to see, and a delight to read of, but the same stricture applies to them that is true of the great abbeys in so many countries of Europe. Those are beautiful for a few moments, or for an hour or two; but, as soon as we realize the deprivation and slowness of the lives led within them, they become tumbled ruins, haunted by spirits and uninhabitable. And life would be no better in these little village communities, in which we could move from one isolation to the next more quickly than their inhabitants could walk to church. We can waste our sentiment, but must not spend our substance on them. Those zealots of religion cannot be altered from their ways. They are places where the corporate life, in retention of their peculiarities, has evolved what is equivalent to a separate species of human being. There are so many such examples, even at the present. We have taken two of them, instances which stand by themselves, the lyrics of the action. So many other specimens could be found, even in Europe to-day. There are all the Balkan countries, and we could lose ourselves, never to emerge again, in Moldavia, the Bukovina, Roumelia, Macedonia, Slovenia, in Moravia, in Ruthenia, or the Carpathians. We could write of Dalecarlia, or of the district of the Gennargentu in the interior strongly marked. How, and why, this should be so is a mystery. There is nothing comparable in Spain. This is all that remains of Tyre and Sidon, on the way to the tin mines of the Cassiterides. Their survival, upon this lonely coast, is one of the wonders of ethnology. I have, myself, seen old fishermen who must have the merchant or pirate blood of thirty centuries predominant in them, so strange was their appearance.

## *Envoi*

of Sardinia. But those western shores brought us to the Atlantic. There were, until just now, other worlds in this world. Now, no one can move. All must stay in their homes. The future has become something of the interior mind and soul. And, thinking of this, we remember our promise, and from places turn to persons.







*Book IV*

AUTOBIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA





## *Autobiographia Literaria*

**W**e believe it to be necessary, above all else, that there should be still places, solitudes or deserts, using those words in their mediaeval sense of wild or forlorn woods, silences where it is possible to speak. This is true, not only in the physical, but the metaphysical sense, as well. The reign of character must be set up again, and those spirits be given encouragement who are wells of refreshment for their fellow men. There are, or there have been, souls at whom the rest of humanity can slake their thirst, who give out wisdom, and shape the present to their pattern. In the foregoing pages I have tried to give some impression, though no more than a sketch or shadow, of the strong presence or personality who urged me into creation. Other and fuller portraits of her are to come. Perhaps there can never have been, among women, a more instinctive understanding for poetry, or a physical genius for its creation more compound of poetry itself, or more transcendent in the degree of its selection and separation from the dross of living. It was under the influence of this extraordinary being that I first knew the intoxication of poetry. For it is, and must be, an intoxication, especially in the young. I have no patience with the workings of logic or cold reason where this thing is concerned. It cannot be by cold thinking that a young man, almost in the beginning of his talent, can express himself with complete technical ease, having had no lessons in the art and nothing but the example of a few poets remote from him in time. It is an inspiration or a ferment. There is no other art in which competence does not demand years of experience. If it is an intoxication, then everything that is in contact with it will burn with an exaggerated light or refulgence. To this I can testify from experience, having composed a body of poetry which, from its absence of political propaganda, may have been treated to something less than it deserves. The volume of that work, six

## *Beginnings of Creation*

hundred pages in length, will prove that I did not allow the inspiration, the spring or fountain to die down, as is its wont, but learned to stimulate its natural growth, so that, from concentration of mind and much practice I was enabled to dwell for long periods of time together in those high altitudes and upon that food of wine and honey. Before long, I was fairly living in the world of my own discovering. It is not necessary for me to particularize further than by saying that my first prose book, that work which I have apostrophized as consisting of 'fantasies of the hot South', was written and composed in one jet, as it were, of inspiration. It is the first copy of it, as it stands and without alteration, that was published, and I do not believe any similar feat on the part of a young writer would be possible had he not undergone the training in poetry to which I had subjected myself. At the time it was written I had no knowledge of the writing and re-writing that, later on, were inevitable for me. I had the audacity to begin, straight away, upon the most difficult and subtle passages of composition. This was in confidence born of the extraordinary experiences in poetry that I had undergone. It is these qualities of courage that are absolutely necessary to the person who would accomplish the rare or transcendental. Those are the excitements that come not often in a lifetime of writing, when the images are born almost from the point of the pen. Sometimes, even, the pen is not fast enough to keep pace with them. The glorious alertness and intoxication of the mind are a sensation not to be described in words. It is creation and speed, in one. No subject is too big, no detail, too little to be remembered. The mood can continue for some days together. Any person, who has known that, has had the greatest happiness the poet or writer can get from his work.

The true creation, then, must be something entirely personal and transcendental. It should and must be recognized in its smallest fragments. It is betrayed in the brushwork, in the forming of a sentence or an image. The touch should be as personal as in the placing of the hands upon the keyboard. It should be sufficient for the hands to touch the notes, for the pianist to be known. Such instantaneous recognition can only be possible when the physical and poetical qualities of a musician are in exceptional harmony together. For, in place of the word 'artist' as used in

## *Beginnings of Creation*

compliment to any painter, writer, actor, musician, my own philosophy, or view of the world, would substitute the word 'poet'. It is in virtue of their sense of beauty that works of art, or their creators, achieve immortality Mere truth, or fidelity to fact, has surely but a small place in this. There are so many other truths that transcend mere verisimilitude. Poetry, moreover, is of particular significance for the English race. It is essentially the English art, as painting is, or used to be, the Italian. We, therefore, put forward poetry as synthesis of all the arts, while stressing its close relationship to music. In that antique age they were born together at a birth. Painting and architecture came later, and are younger. Poetry, used in this sense, is the primal element. It is the eternal or immortal principle. My affinity, because of my youth of poetry, is more with architecture or with music than with, shall we say, the world of fiction. And, where the writing of novels is concerned, it may be questioned how much there is left to be done. The whole world is writing novels. Now the choice of subjects upon which to practise an instrument or a style is not exactly a matter of choosing. It is an affair of instinct. Inspiration, if it is expected, never comes. Invention is the result of labour, and labour only. But it is possible to develop and polish an individuality. It can be trained and guided, but it is of no use to force it. If it has the gift of creation it will move, by instinct, into certain directions. The poet becomes poet, the painter paints. The instinctive inquest or enquiry into your own capabilities will decide this, and will settle it, as can happen so often, during the unconscious side of your life, while you are sleeping, or are working at something else. And, after that, doubt and contradiction set in. For the surface quality, like the faculty that can pass an examination, is often deceptive as to what lies within. Geniuses can be dumb from shyness, or would rather not be seen. They can be absolutely unfitted to the ordinary life of man, or vainglorious and boasting, so swollen with their pride, on which they feed and which is their only support, that few can bear their company, nor believe a word they say. All, at least, are instances of the individual. For history is the tale of persons, not of crowds. Except, again in contradiction, that an epoch can become famous after their deaths for individual persons who during their lives were of no moment. Examples of that,

## *Beginnings of Creation*

during the last hundred years, are so common as to be redundant. It would be superfluous even to mention their names. It has become no less than the universal rule of the modern world.

Once its powers of creation have been assembled and put to work, that type of mind of which I am speaking will feed itself upon the fruits appropriate to its taste. For the power of creation is a living thing, as those must know only too well in whom it has died. It is alive and must keep moving. The energy of this peculiar force will often weaken and wear out the shell or person whom it inhabits. Or it can give to them a strength of personality which is in excess upon their real creative power. Such are they whose genius is for the day. Their talents are ephemeral. They may be actors, executants, or talkers. Nothing is left of them. but, in reward, they may prosper while they live. Those personalities who have, so to speak, the power to survive their own deaths may have been the most lacking in all mundane qualities. But not always. And, sometimes, the work of a painter or musician who seemed only to live for his moment is so instinct with vitality and sense of living that it cannot die. There can be no law about such things. All its pleadings must be for individual persons. Every case is different and has to be judged upon its own merits.

Some part of the theme of this present book being the combat between Romantic and Classical, between physical and metaphysical, these few sentences in which my own initiation were sketched, though I gave no more than the shadow or outline of that guidance, may have given an indication of the camp to which I belonged. But, on closer knowledge, it is the mortality upon either side, the failure in genius, that puts these opposing views into the category of two faiths or religions. And, once the mind has accomplished this, it is evident that there are a hundred undertones. The most material lives may be those upon whom the magical sword descends. It is not so much the opposition of two forces as a war of individualities. And these tendencies can be deduced down from the works of the human mind to the divergence of different personalities. Such shades of romance or failure form our subject.

And, saying this, the scene turns again into the world that we have chosen. That was enlivened at our first discovering

## *Noisy Streets of Naples*

with a light and brilliant architecture. Those were crowd scenes. The noisy streets of Naples, alone among Western cities in its survival from classical antiquity, and the teeming monasteries of Portugal and Mexico, these were my theme. Monks and nuns and beggars, scenes improvised in fresco, sparkling music of the strings, as of the swiftest harpsichord sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, or of operatic finales by Cimarosa or Rossini, with that speed and lightness which were borrowed by Mozart from the music of Naples, such was the material.

Up to this point, or during adolescence, and but seldom after that, the subtler implications are between poetry and prose. In the life of any artist it is poetry that comes first. It is this which is to conquer the world: and, in our world, that cannot happen. Yet, the less it can be, the more obvious it becomes that this should be so. Now, in the noise and horror of our world, it is more true than ever before. It is now that the world has need of this, before it burns or drowns. There must be words somewhere, written in some book, that are the talisman. And, if not that, if it never recovers in our lifetime, it has burned before and risen from its ashes. But it will not, and cannot, vanish. It is saved, not by moneymaking, nor by the blood of wars. Those lose who win, and the losers shall be winners. But, in our world this does not happen. It is only true of the immaterial world, only in unprofitable memories, from which no lesson is ever learned or taken. The ascetic or the voluptuary may find it, but not the scientist or soldier. For we are come again to a material world, like the world of the Romans, which had to be broken by magical formula, by word of mouth, and by what was written in a book. Too soon, it changed. Its hierarchy or priesthood were corrupted, but it became, once more, a world of magic and of miracles. The material world ebbed and left a shore of superstition. And now, it would seem, superstition should have its force again. To those who neither believe in materialism nor in ignorance this may be the tragedy of the modern world. But it inclines, now, to superstition and the artist, who is magician, must see his chance in this.

For only the spiritual, and not the physical, strength of man survives after death. With all artists, in any of the arts, it is nearly an invariable rule that their highest achievement should be among



## *The Material World*

those for which they have been paid least, in money. It has been raped or ravished from them for nothing; and, perhaps, the pleasure of future generations is increased, unknowingly, by this inheritance of cruelty. The time has come again for metaphysical to be kept from physical. Men must be attacked through the soul, or be frightened, and not be shown the picture of themselves. It will not help them to look into the mirror. If they but knew it, a skeleton holding an hourglass stands, ever, by their shoulder. But they cannot look into the half-light. They see nothing, and believe there is nothing. The next day, or another life, wait in that darkness: but, since the future is unknown, they do not seek to know it. Life and death are more, not less, mysterious without religion. Then, there is no pattern for their working. It is arbitrary, without design, or plan. Those who die young quit the earth, but leave their bones, or dust, upon it. They are going, going, gone: and a life has gone out that can be born no more. We, who have no religion, cannot tell these things. Those who have faith can explain it in their own way. They give excuses for it, but they never know the reason. If providence is inscrutable, that is but one more excuse. It tells nothing, and only hints at tyranny. Fate can be mysterious, but it must not blunder and make faults.

But see how the mental is enclosed and confined within the physical characteristics. Every living person must inhabit to this extent the shell or husk of his parents. Their children may be as foundlings, who reproduce the traits of an unknown origin, and take a direction in their talents that no conjecture can foresee. It is impossible to relate together the barber of Maiden Lane and his son, the painter of 'The Bay of Baiae', and yet, physically and in idiosyncrasy, the two of them may have been closely alike. Our nature, in fact, is predatory, for it has to feed upon the past. We work with closed eyes, shunning what lies before our faces. It could be compared to a crustacean growth, to a living creature in an armoured shell, the defences being directed against contemporary time, while stolen from, or built out of the ruins of, another epoch. Our creation is retarded. It is an epiphyte growth, in need of an auxiliary, or an action, indeed, like the catapulting of one aeroplane from the back of another. This is in sign of flagging or deferred vitality, as of a generation in whom sleep,

## *The Romantic Movement*

or digestion, have to be induced by medicine. There are artists who have to drink the cup of poetry in order to create. Shakespeare was a draught or potion to a Verdi, a Delacroix, a Berlioz. Until the drama worked in them, they were actors with no part to play. A reading of poetry as a means to induce the necessary trance of inspiration, this is in sign of what aeroplane designers would call a difficulty in climbing. No contempt for them is inferred in this criticism, for in such a case, flight, once achieved, was as easy and sustained as in any other comparable feat of the imagination, but the mechanics of this descent of the godhead into human form categorize the manner of its functioning and set the particular instrument to one side or the other as belonging to one of the divisions of the human spirit

It was when the visual world began to grow ugly that there arose this sentimental longing for the past. And this coincidence in time was more than a mere symptom of disease. It was, even, participant in the virulence of that attack and burned with the first, and original, revolutionary fervour. An age of reason was coming again to the earth and then, only too soon, was smothered in the bourgeois virtues, while exhibiting, at the same time, a spate or extraordinary tide of military glory. The cooling of this white hot or Romantic fervour ended in an early and miserable death for many of its protagonists. The fate of the three great English poets of the movement need not be mentioned here; but there are so many parallels to be found in Germany, and in Central Europe, that this self-immolation, if that is to say, we allow tuberculosis or insanity to be the results of deliberate overstrain in persons of a febrile constitution, is the probable culmination, more than only a coincidence, in Romantic art. The living death of Heine, the madness of Holderlin, the suicide of Lenau; the insanity of Schumann, the death, in patriotic rebellion, of Petöfi, and, in a duel, of Pushkin; the melancholy end of Mickiewicz, the other great poet of the Slavonic world who, after the extinction of his genius in exile from Poland, died in Constantinople during the Crimean War, trying to help in the attack upon Russia, the hereditary enemy of his country; here are some of the climaxes, or apotheoses, of the Romantic movement. Its tendencies are contradicted only in a few persons of frugal or peasant stock, for example Verdi, who with his unerring instinct

## *The Romantic Movement*

for the theatre kept his life entirely apart from his art. And this is true, also, of Victor Hugo, a man of altogether exceptional physical vitality, but the confinement of this exuberant personage in the close area of the Channel Islands during the whole reign of Napoleon III may have stored and concentrated his energies. Verdi has survived, though, to be known as probably the greatest, or most consistent, of opera composers; while Hugo is not so much forgotten as left unread. It is difficult to understand the enthusiasm and excitement that greeted the first performance of *Hernani*, in 1830, the year of the Romantic revolution, it is more easy, in our day, to appreciate Hugo only for his wildly fantastic drawings. These have the touch of Callot, and of the rare and authentic Doré, and perhaps *Hernani*, seen in these visual terms of parapets and machicolations, of castles that are like a tower of Babel, an inverted or macabre Eddystone rising in midst of a wrack of stormy seas, might recapture what must have seemed the violent strangeness of his first attack. Certainly his few drawings in this character are unique and unlike anything else, and their transference to the theatre, to which they rightly belong might be the occasion, even now, after the lapse of more than a century, for a reconsideration of one of the most famous, if now ignored, personalities upon the Romantic scene.

We would return, it may be, to that world where poet and musician had long hair, where the actor, in a theatre, or passing in the street, could be nothing but an actor. The long-haired man must come again. He must be apart from other men, able to live in a modern flat or hotel bedroom as though it were his tent or medicine lodge. It is, after all, no more difficult than life in a Victorian villa; only with one difference, that the Victorian was quite certain of improvement, that the world was steadily attaining to its ultimate perfection, while his descendant has no doubt of its deterioration. He sees little but death and destruction lying before him. His values, then, are of a different order. They are based upon the month or year. The next world, or the afterlife, as a state of being to be entered seriously into his calculations, has altogether ceased to have its effect. He is, in fact, not sure of it at all, and, if we knew the truth, never thinks of it. But the Victorian era was an age of achievement, while our world is sated with experiment. Modern science has given us, for a

## *The Pleasure Gardens*

hundred blessings, a hundred evils. It is no longer necessary to be indiscriminate in our praise of these. The benefits are obvious, and the defects, also. The hope of new worlds has vanished more utterly than the hope of worlds to come. It is necessary that the laws of survival should be made applicable to those few persons for whom civilization will be remembered, who create each age, and remain, long after its political leaders are forgotten. But the very expression of this view carries with it the improbability that it will ever come to be. It is, therefore, the more necessary to put every emphasis upon that isolation or seclusion which are essential if artists are to live through the perils of the present world. They must, once more, draw attention to themselves, at the same time that they stress their identity together. If they do not forget their differences, all will perish in the catastrophe that is coming. It is for these reasons that we find our attention resting upon the Quaker, the Moravian, persons in whom there was enough obstinacy to carry them safely through two centuries of oppression. Now that they have emerged into the ease of toleration their original virtues will be weakening through disuse. What may be necessary is the formation of those same qualities without the impediment of religion. Learning was only kept alive through the Dark Ages in monasteries and convents. And it would seem, at this present, as though for few or for many years to come it may only survive in certain individual minds in whom it has accumulated. It is certain, at least, that the only art or culture in our time is of the individual in his imagination. It is he who lives in solitude. Here, at least, distance is limitless, and no shadows need fall out of the clouds. The dire importance is to keep this free.



And, now, we enter the pagan day and night. It is a region of theory, peopled by demi-shades. They are ghosts or shadows, understudies of the principals. These are seen, as it were, in diminution upon themselves. It is little more than the hint or suggestion, though their points of resemblance may give to them as general a likeness as have the blossoms of a flowering tree. Their complete expression is the tree, itself, their separate identi-

## *The Porteress, or Lay Sister*

ties are the individual flowers. There are extraordinary parallels, coincidences that must be the work of the devil's advocate, so deliberate is their malice. It is all for the eyes, no worse than that. It is the truth of appearances; but a theatre value and half-fiction, for it is designed to please. These are pleasure gardens. The music is inconsequent. We want to see what we can remember as venal or profane. We must recall that many painters and poets have died in this company, in their own times. Poverty, or perhaps nostalgia, kept them here. They lived in the present, in to-day and yesterday, never nearer to to-morrow. So that world has its hierarchy, but the moments go so quickly that you can mention a name and all has been forgotten. Nothing in this place is static. It is all moving. It may, in fact, be little more than movement. This is the living moment. It need not be the present, so long as it gives the illusion that it lives before our eyes. Like the emotions they seem to fade and die. But their total is something fond and vital, or they would not have this force. Their strength is upon the heart and for the eyes.

It can begin with a hand in a glove of net, holding a cigarette. This is the porteress, or lay sister, sitting at the door. The silken meshes of that black net glove betray the hand within them as a thing of enticement or of provocation. By no other means can the hand be given this character. Here it becomes sensual or animal. In an age when no one is really wicked this effect is, of course, increased by the innocence of the wearer. These are the weeds or mask of depravity, where nothing of the sort is true. And so it becomes a pretence. But there is, ever, the possibility lurking under the net.

Night and day allow of no interval, no pause. The profane world will open for us its inexhaustible emotions. Because these are pagan, and not of the spirit, their potency is of a different nature. It is not everyone who can separate these two worlds. For in order to enter into either of them, the soul has to be purged of all that belongs to its sister creation. It is not possible to belong to both hemispheres with a split or divided soul. The heart and the body have to be entire. Those who attempt this division have often killed that which is immortal in them. It can only be achieved by the growth of a separate nature which can rigorously divide the Sacred and Profane. The one existence

## *The Rose upon the Wall*

must have no knowledge of the other. They must dwell, side by side, and never overlap. To live in one, and be caught up by the other, can be death for both

But the four winds blowing from the four ends of earth are in proof that we have liberty of choice. They blow from the heat or cold, bringing the cordial, or the chill and proud. Yet one wind, and one wind only, brings the summer. That can turn to rain. If it lasts, even if the long days burn till autumn, it must end in winter when natural heat dies out of the heart. Then, people keep close together for companionship. That is sacred love; or it may come back, it may return. But, perhaps, there was no choice. That wind was irremediable. Who is there to explain these things? One life is not time enough. Only the very old can begin to take note of it, but they have lost the heat and live beyond the flame. The fire is dead in them. It is only so rarely that the old have eyes to see. Their comment turns to criticism. They cannot live in the young body. The same blindness walls the pagan from the sacred heart. They have their heart, but it has no soul or spirit. And Sacred Love, unless it tires, does not understand the pagan blood. It is a different, or an alien strain. The one sees but folly in the other. He who leaves the one, and joins her sister, does so renouncing what was his before. It is desertion and renunciation. And, once done, it is seldom he turns back again.

You can pick a rose from the wall and its scent, not the perfume only but the substance of the petals, will suffer metamorphosis, it will change in your hands into living cheeks and lips that have red blood in them. It is but the breath of a moment, and when your eyes open again the living reality has gone. The rose lies there, held in your hands, but another breath brings no more of it. This is as the hand of Sacred Love laid upon your hand. They are the fingers of remorse. There must be persons to whom such fictions have been a perpetual torment while, to a like extent, the rescue from their misery could be accomplished by the same means. The life or death of happiness depends upon such transitory phases that are no more lasting, in their origin, than a passing reflection in a mirror. But breathe at the rose again, drink in its emptiness. The magic has gone from it. There are a hundred more roses, smelling as sweetly, but they are all

## *Love by Substitution*

ghostless. They cannot work that sorcery or enchantment upon you. Their potency has left them.

There would have been nothing gained by substituting for this phantom, for this shadow, the pagan statues of more than one ideal. For we could say that all men in their pagan souls must admit to this plurality. Three or four types or categories, in every instance, are the cardinal points or directions of the soul and body. They are the winds that blow to warm or cool it, for it is certainly true that in this very difference lie two divisions of the human spirit, those who find greatest relief when heat is brought to them in utmost cold, and those to whom this equivalent would be the blessing of a sudden coolness in the fire of the hottest sun. It is the alternative, in this primitive sense, of a cup of warm broth, not brought to the snows, but in the black, iron-bound frost or ice; or drops of rain, the whisper of the wind, the voice among the leaves. And we must narrow down its application till all can feel the meaning. Is your hell, your purgatory, a place of fire, or ice? Perhaps your inferno is the bitter cold. Your heaven is the heat. To those who are of this mind and feeling, to whom paradise is warmth and only death is cold, this instinct must affect profoundly their taste in persons, as in objects. The hundred perversities of truth still further complicate this aboriginal tendency or disposition, for it is something born in one which commands and cannot be consulted. It is of no use to dispute or contradict its rules. These play within their orbit. It is against nature not to move within those limits. They are a set of paths or courses like the underground mazes of a rabbit warren. Unseeing instinct directs us down these tunnellings in the illusion of liberty and freedom. The manner in which their perversities work upon these formal laws is by rule of shadows or reflections. Appearances are the same by opposites. One person is cast as substitute for another. In Profane Love, no one person would be indispensable. Their substitute could always be found, in perversion or variation upon the original. This could be illustrated in a hundred ways.

Yet, these doubled beauties are but gins or traps to catch and hold the heart. Their purpose is but impassivity and destruction. To this end they make use of every weapon that destroys the soul. For such deception is a snare set on purpose. It is the mask

## *Sacred and Profane*

put on the falcon to encourage it, and to keep it from its prey. It is a hood or bandage hiding up its eyes. While this is its quarry it is blind to all else. It is a dead alley leading to no end. What else was that hallucination where the roses grew upon the wall? The scent of their petals blew a ghost into your arms. It laid a cheek against your cheek. It had the scent of that skin and of those fronds of hair, and, in another breath, had cheated you and gone. All its deceits were treachery and imposture.

But there are other contingencies. Those persons who belong to that category to which we joined ourselves will have found their instinct in certain proved directions. To say your paradise is warmth and that hell, to you, is cold, is to admit, already, that there are definite indications in your nature. This will be displayed, as always, in double or reflected paradox. To this must be added, for it is like a system or a run of numbers, the multiples that are in harmony or coalescence with yourself. Such are spokes or flanges in your wheel of fate. They branch out from the heart or centre of your life, but their purpose is towards the rim, the exterior edge of your existence. This is the world as it revolves round you. These are but faces in the crowd.

But there is, in fact, one essential disparity, if we compare this warfare with a war of men. For it is waged against another kind of animal. The female is entirely different from the male. Those men who understand women know their minds but not their souls; whereas the men who have mastered their enemy, overpowered it and forced it to surrender, see the body and do not know the mind or soul. Those men who form the closest friendships with women, who are, by nature, predestined to that intimacy, are, so often, those who are the least interested, and that for shortcomings or deficiencies which remove them from the line of battle. They are exposed, though, equally, or to greater degree, to the full devastation of their mind and soul, but coming from other angles and under the influences, as we might think, of other stars. It would be unwise, therefore, to underrate their feeling, for it is subtlety of understanding that makes them friends with women.

To speak of Sacred and Profane love is to write down all poetry in two words alone. For Sacred and Profane are but the names of two continents, as it were, out of the whole world.



## *Sacred and Profane*

There are all the islands, mountains, rivers. What is most Sacred can be the most wanton; while the Profane can be chaste and only of the spirit, of the soul and heart, but never of the blood. Such contradictions are as though in mimicry of the hazards and chances of the game. It goes by instinct. Its gains may be schemed and planned in advance, but its disasters, on the other hand, are unpremeditated. The most mortal wound is that which probes into the spirit. Nothing can staunch that bleeding, and its capacity for pain will last until all the other senses are numbed. Those persons who possess this unfortunate weakness may try all through their lives to divide the Sacred from the Profane, but the degree of their descent down from the godhead will only cause them to suffer in proportion to that decline. They are doomed, in effect, from the moment of their entry into the myrtle groves. Nothing can save them. It is the seriousness of their feeling that throws the shadow of a myrtle bough even into this mart of glass walls in which we wander. Those leaves tremble above the window: their shade, even, glitters out of the mirror.

This could be called, in its present contingencies, a deer park, a place of fawns and does. And every significance attaches to the name. But, here and now, there is only need to point to the potentialities of the title. For our purpose is to describe the setting in terms nearly appropriate to its original meaning. There is a park paling, a lattice, a mashrabiya. This is not open to all prying eyes. They must lift the blind, or look behind the shutter. Such sunblinds, were we at Naples, could have Vesuvius and Pulcinella painted on their slats. But we must not foreclose upon that languorous heat. At present the grass is pale and white. Fawns and does call to mind ferns and bracken. We hear the clash of antlers. It is a tournament in which King Oberon tilts with two trees for lances. The branches lock together into the antlers of his enemy. Already, these are the courts of love.

We have spoken of the fence which surrounds this park or pleasure ground, and this is true in spiritual as well as in material meaning. It has those protections, wilful or natural, that are equivalent to a code of laws. The object of those laws, as in all legal practice, is much more complicated than the mere guarding of the innocent against evildoers. Those who get caught in the trap are fools or criminals. But the defensive armour, to those

## *The Sacred Park*

who understand, or who have the secret, partakes, as it were, both of the tournament and of the pleasures of the picnic. The laws are profitable, or are a profession in themselves. There are persons whose only livelihood is in the execution of the laws. They never, that is to say, rise higher than messenger or Bow Street runner; they run with the fiat, but are never given any more intimate task than carrier of news. Meanwhile, the more active rôle is played by persons who are professionally suited by nature and long training. As to the laws, they are conveniently adapted to protect those who live *within* them, and for the destruction of any against whom the vote is cast. But our concern is not with them. All our interest lies within the pale.

And, at this point, the park or pleasure garden must lose its original interpretation. These are no longer brakes or spinneys, wooden fences where the stags come to rub the velvet off their horns, waters where, Actaeonlike, they look on the nymphs bathing. Instead, it is a town of houses. The lattice, the mashra-biya, hangs before the windows. There is bright heat, or the footlights, the arc lamps glitter. It is a town, or any town, but with gardens and tall trees. Also, in parenthesis, it is a world of youth. The old, or those who are wise among them, have left it long ago. But the King stag stays fighting for his crown of fronds as if the hungry hounds were pulling him to earth. Those are the woods again, the dells and coppices. And we substitute, for their image, the world of men and women. It is, at this moment, of our own time and place, but will change, when we need it, in metamorphosis, while, since all the figurants are young, there will be little difference but in their dress and manners.

But, before this ends, it becomes again autobiographical and personal. This part of our theme is an appeal to artists, for what it is worth, to drop the mare's nest and the cul-de-sac. They have been led astray on paths that only lead back to the starting point, or even a little way behind that. In the manner of those caterpillars described by Fabre, the naturalist, that he placed on the rim of a bowl and that walked, 'follow-my-leader', for a day and a night until they were footsore and nearly dying, yet never tried any alternative, nor stopped to consider, it could be said of the arts that it is time we should think of what has been lost and what gained. There are so many, and such various things,

## *Conspectus of the Victorians*

that are gone altogether. They are vanished so utterly that they cannot be revived, and must be born anew. Among these, and at first reckoning, are portrait, landscape, fresco paintings, opera, and ten thousand minor things. All forms of handicraft are nearly dead. Even the manuscript of this book, written out in longhand, is an anomaly which is not likely to have its counterpart for much longer, so much more easy is the appeal of shorthand or the typewriter. It is only, we may argue, by the stressing of his peculiar status that the artist will find room for existence. If he is content to be like other men, then all his prerogative must go. He will have brought his own doom upon himself because he would not work for his own safety. He will have been the architect of his own decline. None will pity him. It is his own public before whom he has lost his magic by quitting the stage and lowering himself to the level of the audience.

In view of this, as saviour of the modern world we prefer the aesthete to the scientist, in the conviction that life must be renewed from art and not art be chained to life. It is because art is improvement, not reporting, improvement, not in its primitive sense of amelioration, but meaning that the subject must be dressed according to the rules of art. Its values must be heightened or lowered. To say, as has been said lately by a popular poet, that no author can hope to write a good book unless he joins the working-class movement is as grotesque an absurdity as any utterance of the mid-Victorians. The workers only despise such sentimental affiliation. Also, the author who conscientiously fulfilled this programme would lose even that small public which is his after the larger audience have read the sporting news and seen the films. It is, in reality, of much greater importance that civilization should be retained in the hands of those persons to whom it professionally belongs. Until they are educated, and unless they are, it will be one worker in a million who wants to read a modern poem. To deny this is to be sentimental in just the manner that Holman Hunt was sentimental when he said that it made him frightened to draw a wild flower. The artist must not throw away his prerogative so cheaply. He should insist upon his rights. There is no more evidence of support of the arts from the working classes than there is from the middle classes and far less, need it be said, than there was, of old, from

## *Conspectus of the Victorians*

the church and from the aristocrat. Art is what should come first with the artist; poetry with the poet, and not politics, which, by nature, he is not adapted to understand. It is as contemptible to embrace the worker as it is to live under the shadow of the rich.

The nineteenth century was the era of perpetual, or imagined, improvement. By now, the Victorians would opine, the whole world must be converted to Christianity, meaning, of course, to the Church of England, or, at least, to the various bodies of Dissenters. If this has not happened—and it has not happened—the fault must lie with ourselves. And, indeed, so complete is the contradiction of their prophecies that it does really appear as though their descendants had fallen away from the gates of heaven. There may be no other explanation, save stupidity or sin, for the terrible predicaments of the present time. Now, there are no other worlds, either on this globe, or in the heavens. The new houses have their tenants. No more offers are solicited. The lists are full.

But our concern is with the present or future, not the past. And with a present or future that are just as much creation. For the day that is under our eyes is only melancholy and foreboding. Is this what man was born for: to be snuffed out with a bang? His swarming millions, the more they swarm have that much less of talent. All, who can, must stand aside and live for what they believe in. It is for so little longer they may be allowed that. And, in order to do this, we will treat no more of politics, for this is not a work of propaganda. Instead, we revert to that state of mind or creation looking at it, first of all, to see its tarnishing by time. It may be argued that the risks are much lessened in a case where the penalties of over-popularity do not apply. It is possible to become sickened by repetition and reiteration. This is the manner in which great reputations die. It is their morality, or propaganda, that has killed the great names of the Victorian age. Those are the cobwebs in which they are covered. And they are left in this lumber room of their own creation. The religion that has been their downfall to the next generation has had its place taken, in our own day, by political bias, which, as surely, will bore and weary when we are dead. Our aim, therefore, is neither a religious nor a moral lesson but an experience of a work of art. If this appeals only to a few persons, so much the better. It will not die so quickly

## *Personal Achievement*

One thing is never said too often, that art is pleasure and intoxication. If the delight of it is dwindled down, then its appeal has gone. It is a religious spell, a poetical spell, a trance of music, or it fails. Mere intellectual exercise is not enough, or mathematics would be art. It is, in part, a sensual feeling. Music must affect the skin. While music plays it should be impossible to move. In Hindu mythology, at the sound of Krishna's flute, all earth's beings felt his music in the pores of their skins. All instruments of music played of themselves. The beasts of the forest listened, ravished, unable to move, attentive and with closed eyes, others, motionless and weeping. Such an effect of music was held sacred in antiquity. It was a trance, a sacred trance. And so it continued, in the history of music, until recent times. It may, now, be fifty years since music was written that could make one weep. Of old, and until not so long ago, the same pitch of sensation has been found in painting, in architecture, and in works of the pen. The lesser shades of it used to haunt the minor arts. It is for this reason that they should not have gone. There was so much inspiration in what was equivalent to the fourth or fifth order of the arts. Style and grammar came down from the top. Convention made all things good and there have been times when, because of it, there was nothing bad. Those were the golden ages. This is an age of gold. The time of Pericles, the thirteenth century in France or England, the fifteenth in Italy, the eighteenth in all of Europe, are in proof of what we say. What has been done before can be done again, and better, but not in our times. There is too much to burn. There is so much music that cannot be played again. There is poetry that no one will print. There are buildings that would be better blown down. So much will have to be forgotten. Our day will have to be content with a beginning in little things, or with the individual in his isolation. This is for the moment. But it can quickly change. There are no empty worlds, now. The only freedom is in the mind. For this is the world that we can put in order. It is here that we can arrange and build up new. It is ideas that are immortal, and that pass from life to life.

My world of personal taste, or predilection, may have been sufficiently stressed in the books that I have written. Some few of these, even though it is the author speaking, could have

## *Personal Achievement*

been written by no one else This is no question of their merit. It is only a matter of special equipment and training. Criticism has been levelled at me for choosing the subjects that appealed to me, instead of setting my hand to an ungrateful task. I have been accused of not having suffered, or taken serious pains in my labour, though four books, in particular, each of which took me two, or two and a half, years to write, I hold to be ample refutation of this charge Perhaps, in view of that, I may be absolved from the offence of not having worked. My aim has been to perfect an instrument for my hands that could accomplish tasks of a delicacy, or a swiftness of execution, that are not usually to be found in books The creation of a personal world of choice has engrossed all my efforts since I was old enough to know my own direction. The four cardinal points of that, the North and South, and East and West of it, were fixed or set for me, long ago I have indicated, but in the matter of prose, not poetry, the first subject which attracted my attention. For my next theme I turned inwards and upon myself. A particular world was created, or projected, that existed only within the imagination It took two years of my life for this to be achieved. And again, for two years and more, rejecting all that was light and Italian, I worked upon a Northern or Gothic subject. Three or four years were wasted in disappointment, and in writing poems, and once more having the strength and resolution, the shades of the Quick and the Dead invited me, and I lived among them. Now, having done that, and in two years written twelve books more, I address myself to this. For my creation has grown with me. It is now a world of living persons. There is flesh and blood within these pages. One is a living being and must be allowed those personal obsessions that work more strongly upon the heart than any feat of learning

Of such were the Ursari. They led on to the Kelpen, to the feast of the Wandering Sinte That ghostly fanfare from the old barracks of Granada, the Castillo di Bibataubin, took us in the same mood, to little Benvenuto, that most unusual of phenomena, a phantasm of the living. We have to call him that because his possibility is omnipresent. He is the ghost, or symbol, of someone kept wandering for ever outside the walls of paradise, the fault being wrong education He is the symbol of the world

### *Envoi*

gone wrong. 'I am at the point of death; I have come to an end before having had the enjoyment of my talent. Life was, indeed, so beautiful, my career began under such fortunate auspices; but one cannot change one's own destiny. No one can measure his own days, one must resign oneself, it will be as providence wills.'\* With the ghost seen by us, in August, in the ilex wood, it is different. She has fulfilled herself. And we have searched high and low, in places near and remote, for more evidence of how the world can right itself. Even if we leave out of account all poems written, the world of our creation cannot be blamed for dullness or for lack of colour. The light and brilliant, the virtuoso air, breathes from its pages. But, also, it is deep and solemn. All is not so happy. There is epic misery, the torments of Tantalus, men chained to the rocks, the dog Cerberus. And, now, we have walked with rags and bones, have lived in prisons of our own making. These were the men and women who had travelled three or four thousand miles into the unknown in order to be free to worship as they pleased. But they took with them the devil within their own breasts. Their lives of the cloister have no more to tell us. For it is the pagan day and night. And we take you to the portress, or lay sister, sitting at the door.

\* Mozart, in his last letter to Lorenzo da Ponte.

*Book V*  
OF SACRED AND PROFANE  
LOVE







## *Of Sacred and Profane Love*

### 1

**I**t can begin, as we have said, with a hand in a glove of net, holding a cigarette. Everyone, man or woman, girl or boy, has to pay for his or her entrance into the pleasure gardens: and this is where you need a coin. Some hold it ready: others beg, or borrow. And it can be the first sensation of this pagan world to have the change pushed back to you by that black gloved hand

Her face is masked. It is only by her smiling lips that you can know her. For there are, of course, certain persons who form the embodiment of the moment. They play this, even, without any suspicion of the past. This is, indeed, our comfort and illusion. Yet this is but the surface, but the moment of our arrival. It is the shining of the hour. And its action, to this moment, is behind walls of glass. From the street outside the whole façade is glass, while in this gleaming interior, where the sun enters but the lights do ever burn, what is not glass is mirror. It would be unwise, though, to transfer such qualities into the human heart. This is but a temporary environment. It would be as true of it to paint the sparing luxury of an expensive motor, a tennis court, or swimming pool. Any of these, for background, would give the rectilinear frame.

Such is the label or ticket of modernity: but modern turns to ancient in our time. It is no more than the penpoint writing down the news. It is this fresh ink, not yet drying on the page, and the line above it is no longer the present. It has gone behind your eyes. The modern, in contrast of scale, lasts a year, or five years. If we want the living present it must be the year, even in its seasons. And we choose the high summer and hot pavements. But, given that background, it may be a year, or any year, in the existence of those conditions. We must feel the breath of them upon our wrists and foreheads. We must have the smell of them

## *Recognition*

in our nostrils. Those persons who come in and out between the plate-glass walls are to burn into a permanence. They must be immortal as the shadows in the myrtle grove.

Such is the recognition. It is the miracle of a moment, of no longer life than the meeting of our eyes. We know her in her mask, and from her smiling lips, and can pass inside. This person, the portress or lay sister of the evening, has been chosen by fate, or by the hand of coincidence. So much we see, waiting our turn, putting down the coin. And, of a sudden, we know her. It is with a beating heart, and in the stillness of a trance of music, that we go inside.

As we enter, there is a row of waxwork figures for, at this moment, it is like a music hall, like the Moulin Rouge. We see a monstrous, dwarf figure, very dark and black, and sallow skinned. He has close-cropped hair, wears 'pince-nez', has a beard, and thick and monstrous lips. He could be the dwarf who sells cigarettes and matches in the cafés, were it not that he is smartly dressed, that he has something of the dandy. His clothes, even, have been made for him by a London tailor, for his was the snobbishness of the race course and the drinking bar, who, by birth, was an aristocrat and of the oldest blood in France. What a curious and unlikely form for an intelligence to take! And how could one divine it in such a monstrous presence! He is always drunk, too, not so much for misery as in order to be equal and on a level footing with his companions. But now, like an hallucination, his waxwork figure steps down and walks away, with a short and jerky stride. It was his little joke to stand among the waxworks, where, indeed, they have since placed his figure, just inside the door. And we follow behind him into the dancing hall.

If this is the first and most obvious of our destinations, made too familiar in books, but never properly described, we enter with him, none the less. So blind are the eyes, so deaf the ears that write of it, we are never even told who composed the music of the famous quadrilles, but must guess Olivier Métra. We are late. The music has begun. It is a band like a circus band, but heavier in brass. Now this has the haunting experience, for myself, that it but just misses me in time. It is so easy to picture the past, but so difficult when it is a few months, or a year or two, before you were born. The quadrilles and cancons of the 'sixties

## *Valentin-le-désossé*

come more easily to me because of the cloven foot, the thin and long black boots of Offenbach, his trousers (like a devil or a satyr in trousers), his tail coat, his fur collar, his whiskers, his 'pince-nez', and his Jewish baldness. But this is different; though it has the same rhythms, the same fanfares for the 'grand écart'. They may waltz the waltzes of the skating rink; and some of the music-hall tunes come already from the U.S.A. and have the germs of another future in them.

The names of the dancers are too well known; but we except that extraordinary and birdlike profile, the aquiline nose, the tall top hat, the acromegalic, but lean or bony jaws—of Valentin, for he was a genius of the dance, and it is for his sake we have come here. He is an amateur, not a paid dancer, and dances every night for his own pleasure, though with gaunt and cadaverous expression, never smiling. In the daytime, Valentin runs a little grocer's shop and serves his customers. In the evening, when the shutters come down, he travels by métro to the music hall. He leaves his coat and top hat in the cloak room, being, still, 'patron' and not 'employé', free to leave when he wills, and yet permanent and upon the establishment. What can have given him this passion for dancing? We would say no more, nor less, than that he has a genius for it. And, again, how curious and improbable a form, not adapted in its bony angularities to the dance, any more than are the capering skeletons of the dance of death. But see his enormous hand, drawn and commented upon by Toulouse-Lautrec, and you begin to feel, as it were, the beating of the time in him. In one of his posters, an art of which he is the only master, Lautrec has drawn him as a grey profile or shadow in the foreground, the graining of the lithographic stone being of the exact texture of this hawk or nightbird, who is drawn flat, like a shadow on a paper lantern, with only the lines of his long and bony hands and the grim or sardonic hollows of his face. All round him in that empty space of paper there are lights and music. Valentin is held still for us, as it were, in the flat area of a field of light, from the back, it might be, of a magic lantern, and is thrown in shadow on the screen. He only stays there for a moment, but his portrait has been taken.

This is, after Deburau, probably the greatest eccentric dancer there has ever been, not excepting Little Tich who, also, was

## *Little Tich*

known to Lautrec, and whom many persons, the writer among them, must remember dancing on the points of his enormous, yard-long boots. He would suddenly, from his diminutive height, spring into the air and dance, as if on stilts; varying this by standing on the boards and, without moving his feet, banging his head upon the boards; or take the applause, banked forward, as though braking himself with the immense length of his boots, while raising his hat as if posed to have his photograph taken. Those long boots, in fact, had eccentric or dramatic importance, like the shovel hat of Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere*. That gives us the whole priest-ridden South; and this, a world of comic but eccentric individuality, sinister certainly, for Little Tich was decidedly sinister, and so is Valentin, who is silent all the time and never talks, absorbed in himself and in his dancing. It is a religion or an ecstasy in his case, and not ordinary enjoyment.

For fifteen or twenty years he has danced every night, making no money by it. For the rest, during summer afternoons he does a little gardening and, sometimes, La Goulue spends the day with him and is to be seen over a back wall, or from a back window, pruning his roses. On Sundays, in fine weather, he drives his pony and trap to Saint-Cloud, or to the Bois de Boulogne, and often brings La Goulue with him. It is said that they take a picnic with them, and will celebrate a bony fête champêtre, all to themselves, in some dell of the forest. We may be certain that they scarcely talk at all, but this does not lessen our curiosity, for we have a longing to hear them speak one word or phrase. No queerer pair of persons can ever have been thrown together by the hazards of their profession. And who would think in looking at them that Valentin would be the first to die in his eccentric prime, and that his companion would have existed into our own times, reduced to begging from table to table in the cafés, fuddled with drink, her memories gone from her, to die, at last, alone and forgotten, in a wretched caravan on a waste ground of garbage and old tins. And yet, we do not know her origin, which may have been, in all probability, as miserable as this. To be born, and die, on a deserted fair ground, such was the natural curve, or trajectory, of her days and nights. This was marked upon the map of her life and, in the end, she will arrive at it and fulfil the pattern.

## *First Sight of the Bandstand*

### II

But these are no more than shadows on the curtain. We are to have day as well as night, the woods and fields besides their fiction in the theatre, but never far from music, or from the blaring of the band. At one moment, it is a garden or a lake or river, near the bandstand, it can even be the spa by the seaside, or the pier upon the sea, it does not matter, we have come here to think and listen, and to enjoy what it can bring to us. Or, in an instant, be back once more in the theatre. Or the tunes can become portraits, for this may happen. But, at the moment, we stay here, as though in love with no one. It is so lonely in this high summer weather. Is it afternoon, or evening? The chestnut candles gutter to the ground. So thick are the fields with buttercups and daisies that their drifts are entire kingdoms. And we smell the lime flowers, most magical of scents, for one has, always, to look up into the trees and wonder how the little lime bells have that breath in them, and then be lost in the beauty of their green boughs. Or the siren waves are singing. The northern sea is calm enough, and blue for Arethusa.

But the mood alters. In a moment these are café tables. It is the open air, underneath the trees, Bad-Ischl or Baden, some summer town where they take cures or drink the waters. We are to hear the music, not of these streams and forests, but of the city of a million souls. We are told that it is their emanation, their lifeblood, the beating of their hearts, though, really, it is the work of one man, born to it because his father did the same. His father and his brothers composed waltzes, but his own genius fulfilled them all and absorbed them. It is his summer holiday and he plays here with his band, being, now, about sixty years old. On his way to the bandstand he is recognized and saluted, and we see him climb into his desk, take his violin from its case, and begin to tune it. This is his famous orchestra, whom he has led for many years, and it is only a few moments till they are ready to begin. In fact, it is so quick that it is lacking in impressiveness. But there comes the electrical moment. Holding his bow in his

## *Johann Strauss*

right hand, he gives the beat, and the moment of that must be among the extraordinary sensations of music. It is a suspended silence, a pause in time, the shape and limits of which have given up their soul to him. An instant after, comes the Viennese opening, the preludings of the waltz and, immediately, its own language is spoken. Unlike the music of many other composers, this is instinct, or eloquent, in the man himself. You have only to see him, even in an old photograph, to feel the touch of his personality. He has fixed his energy, even upon the silver plate of an old daguerreotype; and, in later photographs, of the 'seventies and 'eighties, at this present, he has lost nothing of that fire and magnetism. You see it in his eyes, and in the pose of his head and shoulders, which are quasi-military in bearing. He walks, as we saw him, now, but a moment ago, with a peculiar stride which, too, is the index to his personality for it shows decision and is the step or movement of the person whom above all others who have ever lived has set the crowd in motion. You see it in the pride and alertness of his pomaded hair, according to the fashion of the day; in his nervous and aquiline features; and in his alert moustachios. He is, by no means, the typical Viennese. There is more in him of the Hungarian, or Pole, until we remember that, far back, in distant solution, he may have had a strain of the Spanish Jew and that this Sephardim ancestry, the aristocracy of the Semitic world, would account, in part, for his quasi-military, his stage distinction.

He leads his orchestra, violin in hand, which gives rhythm and accent to this world he has created. In that age of great orchestral conductors, Richter, Nikisch, von Bulow, it is agreed that there is none to excel him in certain effects, which is to say that no one can play his own music as he does, himself. The path of it is easy, leading from enchantment to enchantment, but who is there to interpret what it means? This is the music of pleasure; mostly, pure music, the patternings of sounds, but the tunes, sometimes, are male or female, this, beyond doubt or contradiction, and there are phrases which are, unmistakably, the portraits of persons. For that, he has the theatre as well as the living world to draw from. And, where they are not sentiment, by which we mean moods inspired by a particular person, and taking their form from that, we are to think of them as abstractions of appear-

## *Morgenblätter*

ance, the lights of which may be immortal, in the sense that they are true of all time, or we can fancy that we see in them things that are typical of a season, or an hour; the flounces of a crinoline held up a few inches off the ground, showing white stockings and a pair of black kid boots; pretty figures, fresh as paint, in peasant dresses, in the *dirndl*, from the theatre or by the *Kurhaus*, under the hanging woods, to a Styrian waltz, or landler; military glitter, as of the Hungarian Life Guard riding to a trumpet march, through the streets of the capital to the *Hofburg*; the hundred and one things that he would remember and that would inspire him. What waltz is it that the band are playing? Can it be the lovely *Morgenblätter*! This begins like a valse of *Waldeufel*, and is familiar from its first bars. But how quickly, in a moment, in a phrase, it is of *Johann Strauss*! This is an old waltz written in the 'sixties. It has a tired beginning, and recovers itself immediately into formality and grace, but is pure pattern making, for its pictorial symbolism, so far as this can be read into it (and it is, of course, arbitrary and individual to each hearer), would seem to remind one of ivy and shadow ivy, not upon old walls and ruins, but ivy that was the fashion in the 'sixties, on the walls of new houses, in the ballroom, even upon the bandstand.

Of its title, *Morgenblätter*, 'the morning papers', there is no indication, though the history of this waltz is that it was composed upon invitation from a ball committee as rival to *Offenbach's Die Abendblätter*, which was then being produced by its composer in Vienna. *Offenbach* had come to the capital for the Vienna Carnival, and had three operettas playing at the same time in different theatres. This waltz has its own existence as a set piece, an abstraction, the mood of which is tired, but the rhythm is so insistent and the tunes so beautifully ornamented that it stays in the memory as though we have been given the miracle of a few moments of life on a late afternoon in the summer of 1864.

The form, or unfolding, of *Morgenblätter* is typical of the *Strauss* waltz of the 'sixties. This was a period at which he wrote many waltzes to order, upon commissions from various Viennese clubs and guilds, societies of artists, or sharpshooters, benevolent confraternities, and so forth, who would produce them, every



## *Strauss and Waldteufel*

year, at their annual dances, in deep rivalry with each other.\* And it explains the downright character of these pieces, which were intended to be danced to in a public building, or in the open air, and which needed no long introduction. He led his own dance band, which had been famous since his father's time, twenty, or even thirty years before, and had, by this time, composed so vast a quantity of music of all descriptions, waltzes, polkas, marches and quadrilles, that he was not always able to recognize a piece that he had written. This is the more easy to understand when it is considered that his earlier compositions much resembled those of his father; that he had two brothers who wrote dance music; and that the innumerable works of his rivals, Ziehrer and Lanner, were in the same idiom and based upon the same principles which remained unaltered until he extended and improved them. Those two composers were contemporaries of his father. They began in the Biedermeier period, in the Vienna of narrow streets and alleys known to Schubert, and before the great rebuilding of the town. *Morgenblätter*, *Künstlerleben*, are of their pattern, though, when we listen to this pair of waltzes, they have changed in spirit. Johann Strauss is forty years old, and his ceaseless production has taken him far from the naïf charm of the early waltzes. As interpreter of contemporary time, of his own day, this is the web or texture of the middle 'sixties, influenced, even by Offenbach, by Waldteufel. So far, in fact, he was another Waldteufel. We must compare the delightful *Les Patineurs*, *Estudiantina*, *Les Sirènes*, to *Morgenblätter*. *Les Patineurs* is familiar to everyone, with its sleigh bells, *Estudiantina* is not less popular, even now after seventy years and more, with its rhythms of popular Spanish music, of Chabrier and of the early Albeniz; *Les Sirènes* may be the most charming and melodious of the lot. Waldteufel was the younger man, there was a dozen years' difference between them, but he never improved upon these summits of his achievement.

\* For the lawyers Johann Strauss wrote the *Juristenballtänze* (The Jurist's Dance), *Solonsprüche* (Judgments of Solomon), *Kontroversen* (Arguments), for the doctors, *Panaceaklänge* (Panacea Chords), *Leberswecker* (Liver Shaker), *Erhöhte Pulse* (Heightened Pulse), for the technicians, *Schallwellen* (Sound Waves), *Sirenen* (Sirens), *Schwungräder* (Flywheels), and the famous *Akzelerationen*, one of the most beautiful of all his compositions written for an engineer's dance. Cf. *The Waltz Kings of Old Vienna*, by Ada B. Teetgen (Herbert Jenkins, London, 1939).

## *Meeting of Strauss and Offenbach*

The Waldteufel waltz is like a cake with two layers; it has tune and countertune, repeat and finish. They are scenes and places; but are never persons. Neither has the theatre influenced their convention. It is music of the bandstand or the ballroom; never of the stage. The later triumphs of Johann Strauss caused so many of his earlier successes to be forgotten. Between 1844 and 1872, which is before *Die Fledermaus* was written, Johann Strauss had composed some three hundred and fifty separate pieces of dance music. It is, probably, safe to say that no one knows what has been lost in this accumulation of forgotten tunes. Many of them were written, literally, on the day, for the day. But, already, even in his early waltzes, the form is so much more studied and elaborate than in the case of Waldteufel. Every waltz of Strauss consists of four or five sections, each containing two separate themes, while, in the period after Morgenblatter, which may be taken as marking the end of his youth, the waltzes are given long preludes or introductions which amount, almost, to an overture in miniature. In fact, as is nearly always the case when the fertility of any artist is in question, this prodigal talent can be seen perpetually renewing itself and taking immense pains to that end.

The conspicuous change or alteration in Johann Strauss comes after this time. It has been said that a remark made to him by Offenbach inspired him to think of writing operetta. This has, at any rate, approximate truth, for it must have been the success of the French composer in three theatres at once, in a foreign capital, that made him determine to try for a more permanent public. However this may be, it is certainly fascinating for ourselves to conjecture the meeting of these two composers. Offenbach, as we have said, had come to Vienna for the Carnival, and was staying at the 'Goldenes Lamm' in the Leopoldstadt. He had brought with him an 'expensive petite amie' from Paris, though her identity is not disclosed to us, but, doubtless, she was one of the lesser stars of the Variétés, or the Bouffes Parisiennes. It is the most characteristic period of the 'sixties, coming, in the case of Offenbach, just before *Barbe-Bleue*, *La Périchole*, *La Vie Parisienne*, and at the beginning of the real fame of Strauss. Not that his successes had been confined, so far, to his native land. He was already, for instance, famous in the Russian capital,

## *The Waltzes of Pavlovsk*

having, by improbable invitation from the newly formed railway company, played for no less than twelve seasons in their pavilion, or Vauxhall, at Pavlovsk, the favourite summer excursion from St. Petersburg. He spent from May to September there of every year, and had composed immense quantities of music specially for these occasions.\* His experiences, then, had been not less cosmopolitan than those of Offenbach; but they had led him in a different direction and to the dance hall instead of to the theatre. If we could only see into the minds of those two men, during that Carnival of 1864, so curiously contrasted, but so contingent in many ways, what should we not know of the humour and gaiety that our age has never seen! This was before the invasion of the negro, before the invention of such vulgarity and silliness that the public is content with it and has found an universal language that can never change and is at the level of its own soul. The impingement of two such characters, however little friendship there may have been between them, is something that can never come again. They held, between them, the last true glitter of amusement, for, certainly, music of that degree of enjoyment and happiness, cynical or real, theatrical or feigned, has never been written since. They were its last, and only, protagonists.

When we think of them it is to see each composer in his own world of curious invention. And the thought of this might become equivalent to a crowd of characters haunting his hotel apartment. They accompany him wherever he goes, to Paris, to Vichy, to Étretat (where Offenbach had his villa): and, in the case of Johann Strauss, to Vienna, to St. Petersburg, to Ischl †. Perhaps this Russian side of his development has never been

\* Among these are to be found *Alexandrine Polka*, *Adieu von Petersburg*, *Aus dem Pavlovskwald*, *Fürst Bariatinsky Marsch*, *Großfürsten Marsch*, *Im Russischen Dorfe*, *Nikolai Quadrille*, *Slowianka Quadrille*, *Warschauer Polka*, the *Polkas l'Inconnue* and *Olga*, a Fantasy for the Piano-forte called 'In a Russian Village', and a Coronation March for Alexander II and the Czarina Maria Alexandrovna.

† Offenbach built his villa at Étretat in 1860, on the proceeds of *Orphée aux Enfers*. He called it the *Villa Orphée*, and wrote much of his music there. No one who loves his music would guess that much of it was written on the coast of the English Channel. Johann Strauss, whose fortunes were later in date, did not buy his villa at Ischl until 1878, but it is curious to think that he composed the splendid third act of *Zigeunerbaron* at Ostend, in 1884.

## *Strauss in St. Petersburg*

sufficiently stressed where Johann Strauss is concerned, though St. Petersburg, after Vienna, was the city in which he had played most, and for which he had composed most music. All that side of his output has been entirely neglected. It would be interesting to search in it for the differences between the Vienna and St. Petersburg public. Some of his dance music will prove to be based upon Russian popular themes, and there should be echoes of the wonderful gypsy tunes of the *cafés chantants*, such as are to be recognized, too, in violin pieces by Pablo de Sarasate, for instance the beautiful slow melody of his *Zigeunerwiesen*.<sup>\*</sup> Their influence upon Johann Strauss in *Die Fledermaus*, and in the later *Zigeunerbaron*, may prove to be in dilution of the obvious Hungarian element in those pieces, since it could be argued that Johann Strauss knew St. Petersburg better than Budapest † Even so early as 1864, the year of *Morgenblätter*, the enormous achievement that he had behind him was complicated by these different elements, which become still more intricate in their scope if we consider Johann Strauss not only as a waltz composer. For he wrote, as well as waltzes, polkas which are little miracles of lightness. Until these have been heard, it would seem impossible that grace and variety could be given to such a simple form. In other hands it deteriorates into a noisy romp. It is only Smetana, who can give to it the flavour of bright dresses and white villages, of deep pine woods and the goose meadows,

<sup>\*</sup> According to another account, this melody was taken by Sarasate from a musical play by Szentirmai, a Hungarian. The derivation of many of these now unduly neglected violin pieces by Sarasate would make an interesting study. All who remember him say that he was inimitable in his playing of them, and, as melodies, they could, surely, be compared to Albeniz. But Albeniz, in his later work, belongs to the school of Debussy and Ravel, while Sarasate is, now, nearly forgotten.

† During his years in the Russian capital, Johann Strauss had a romance with a young Russian, Olga Smirnitzki. The polkas, *l'Inconnue* and *Olga*, are the memorials of this. They met in the park at Pavlovsk, and the musician would leave notes and bonbons for his mistress in the trunk of a hollow tree. He would attempt to read her answers while driving to his concerts, but the lanterns were too feeble. So he read them in the intervals of the concerts. These details we learn from his letters. 'I allowed', he writes to her, 'all the ladies of Pavlovsk and Tsarskoe Selo to walk past me until the feel of their space-consuming crinolines and the rustle of their dresses roused me from my dreaming.' What a precious document such a letter is, coming from the composer of *Die Fledermaus*! Cf. *The Waltz Kings of Old Vienna*, by Ada B. Teetgen.

## *The Polka*

in his Bohemian polkas But here is the difference. The polkas of Strauss would seem to be directly influenced by Offenbach, who indulged his humour, which was with him a freakish sense of beauty, in scattering treasures of wit and originality through his comic operas and operettas, sudden inspirations coming with no warning and for no reason, mere promptings of his comic genius Anyone who loves the music of Offenbach will know these revelations of his wit and devilment, the tunes taking shapes of utter fantasy and being dressed by the orchestra with a grace and sparkle to which it is a ravishment to listen It can be a bolero, a tyrolienne, a tarantella, but whenever it is a waltz, more still, a polka or a gallop, we can think from Offenbach to Johann Strauss and hear in it the influence of the older upon the younger man The Libelle, or the Annen polka, the Tritsch-Tratsch (from *Die Fledermaus*), these, in their speed and lightness, are as neat as Offenbach They are prettier to listen to, but they lack his cloven hoof And yet, listening to Johann Strauss, we must believe he had the Gypsy in him This, we shall come to later

The career of Offenbach in the French capital was due, perhaps, as much to his wit as to the strictly musical quality of his genius It must be remembered, even so, that Paris had been the musical centre of the world The city which had been the home of Chopin and of Liszt, knew Rossini, Bellini, Meyerbeer, and it was to a public who were familiar with those forgotten operas that Offenbach made his appeal To the public of that day his music was no isolated phenomenon, for its wit and satire were based upon the great tradition, while, in melody, it was not inferior to the models from which it had strayed into these new paths of fantasy and humour The public of Vienna was of a different order, just as the genius of Johann Strauss had gaiety but not wit and his tunes an air of breeding which, in his introductions and codas, or terminations, not only derives from Mozart or Haydn, but might seem, fancifully, to be the unconscious production of a mind that was educated in the city of von Erlach and came to fruition either there or amid the luxuries of St Petersburg It would be superfluous to mention that Beethoven, Schubert, later, Brahms, lived in Vienna The influence of Schubert, at least, can be found in Johann Strauss, who, in his turn affected Brahms, his great admirer, who may have settled in

## *Fiakre-Walzer*

Vienna because of the beauty of the popular music. This is no exaggeration, for all that his public saw in him the successor to Beethoven, when we consider how he loved the waltz and the Hungarian idiom.

But we must conceive that, in the time of Brahms and Johann Strauss, even the street music, the songs and waltzes of the common people, were characteristic of the great history of the city. Anyone who has heard the 'fiakre-walzer', the cabmen's waltzes, will agree to this. There must have been a hundred years during which this particular sub-music lasted. New tunes will have been invented every year. Probably this music was at its height during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Those tunes heard by the present writer belonged, obviously, to the early 'nineteen hundreds', to the age of Lehar and Leo Fall, but their rhythm gave the impression of a life and a language only to be described, like the second act of *Der Rosenkavalier*, as an orchestral scherzo. The pouncing, turning rhythms of the waltz, the guttural voices of the cabmen, if sung as I heard them (by the late Walter Beigel), form a musical experience that can never be forgotten.\* Such was the pitch of excellence to which music had come in the city that, after the epoch of its great masters, had the Strausses, father and son, Lanner and Ziehrer, for the popular speech, the vernacular, of their days and nights.

The suggestion that Johann Strauss should compose for the theatre took a period of seven years to mature. During this interval he came to Paris for the Exhibition of 1867 and played there with enormous success (it was at the time of Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne*), and followed this by a triumphant season, during August and September, in London. On his return to Vienna he wrote the lovely Wiener Wald and, within a few months, *Kunstlerleben* and *Wein, Weib und Gesang*, originally part songs for the Male Choral Society. He found time, too, to return, year by year, for his Russian concerts at the Vauxhall. We give these details in order to stress the endless fertility of his genius. Nor was this all. He composed, at this same time, a number of polkas which are among the most charming and original of

\* These 'fiakre-walzer' have, of course, a close connection with the actor Alexander Girardi, who took the leading parts in Strauss's operettas and whose favourite rôle was that of a Viennese cabman.

## *Die Fledermaus*

all his works (including the famous *Feuerfest*, in which the time is given by strokes of a hammer upon a blacksmith's anvil),\* many of them intended especially for the balls at Budapest. Moreover, he crossed the Atlantic for the World's Peace Jubilee of 1872, performed at New York, and played at fourteen concerts and an immense ball, with an orchestra of three hundred musicians, at Boston. But the time was coming for more serious enterprise. After a first, comparative failure with *Indigo*, Johann Strauss produced *Carnival in Rome*, the second of his operettas, in the next year, 1873 and, in the year after that, the immortal *Fledermaus*. He was, by now, close upon his fiftieth year. There have been but few persons in the history of the theatre to accomplish this difficult transition when as old as that. The composer of music for the dance hall had developed his genius in a way which was not to be expected of his spontaneous and effusive talent. No mere writer of tunes by the hundred, however good in themselves, could have written the overture to *Fledermaus*. It marks the appearance of a new and transcendent personality upon the scene. The present writer has already been called to order, some years ago, for suggesting that could Mozart have heard *Die Fledermaus* he would have preferred it to the music-cycles of Richard Wagner. This can only be conjecture, but is it not the probable truth? The rapid intelligence of that music, its breeding and refinement, even in its address to a public of many millions, that and, also, we may infer, the previous achievements of Johann Strauss in all their multiplicity, would have appealed to Mozart. His reaction to this music might well be one of astonishment at the improvement in the public taste. An age in which the music of the streets and cafés is that of Johann Strauss must mark the highest degree of musical education ever reached by the general public.

During the rest of his long life, for he lived for another quarter of a century, until 1899, he hardly wrote other music than for his operettas. More often than not these were failures; but it did not matter, because the piece came off, but the tunes

\* *Feuerfest*, in actual fact, was composed by Josef Strauss, his younger brother. Possessed of a talent not less remarkable than that of Johann, he spent much of his working life in Russia and died at Warsaw, in somewhat tragic circumstances, in 1870

## *His Later Overtures*

survived. Exceptions to this rule are the concert-waltzes *Frühlingstümme*, *Myrtenblüten*, and *Nordseebilde*, which are among the most delightful of all his inspirations. To conclude his career we need only mention *Spitzentuch* (The Queen's Lace Handkerchief), *A Night in Venice*, *Zigeunerbaron*, and his one serious opera, *Ritter Pasman*. The three first named of these are practically unknown in this country, though *Zigeunerbaron*, with so much of its music in the Hungarian idiom, including stirring choruses into which the Rakoczy march is incorporated, cannot be held inferior to *Die Fledermaus*. His one serious opera, *Ritter Pasman*, is forgotten now, in spite of the ballet scene with its waltzes and gallops and Hungarian tunes. It may be said, too, of all his other forgotten operettas that they contain an overture, a waltz, or a chorus that should be saved. The overtures of *Waldmeister*, of *Fürsten Ninetta*, both dating from the 'nineties and belonging to pieces which ran for a season and no more, have a speed and grace, a delicacy of phrasing that are, and can only be, the inimitable Johann Strauss. Particularly in the overture to *Waldmeister* are his qualities to be appreciated. There is, even, a special delight to be had from the lesser things, the ephemera, of such a master, pieces written, that were not intended for a long life, and that can have for ourselves the feeling of a hot summer afternoon in his villa at Ischl, where so much of his music was composed, with the thought of the summer characters of that watering place and of the band, not far away, playing waltzes that reminded everyone of Vienna and many of them of their youth, thirty years before, in a different world, but still enlivened by his waltzes. Some of the entr'actes of Johann Strauss are full, too, of memories. An entr'acte to *The Thousand and One Nights* (a different and later version of *Indigo*) can be the epitome of what I mean, for, to at least one member of his audience, it resumes into a few moments of time a sort of theatrical reverie or lassitude. It begins, and ends, softly, and in the middle section, one of the big tunes or airs of the operetta is treated broadly and with moving effect, as though in sentimental comment or emphasis upon its assured popularity. The composer, as it were, has come outside the whole structure of his career in order to take a look at it, just as simply as though he were taking the air outside the theatre, during the interval. But, when we come



## *The Python*

back to our seats, there he is already, playing to a half-empty house. The music dies away as we get to our places, and the curtain rises.

This sixty year old composer, for that is when we see him, has been married three times. His black hair and black moustaches are too raven black. They have been dipped into the dye pot. This is no longer the Johann Strauss of the 'sixties. Then, he had the pomaded hair, the Dundreary whiskers of the day. But it was not in his character to grow old. After his third marriage, his second wife who was much younger having run away from him, he cut his hair and even, so anxious was he to prove his vigour and decision, abjured Roman Catholicism and joined the Protestant Church, a drastic step for any Austrian to take, spending some months at Coburg in preparation for this change. Decidedly, he refuses to grow old. The black lead pencil on his hair and moustaches, or the paint brush dipped in gall, have given to him, this is the coincidence, an air as of an old dancing master. He wears, moreover, pointed shoes, while his clothes are the key, too, to a vain and arrogant nature, but softened by success. The effect of these idiosyncrasies is to point or draw attention to him in just the way he would most have wished to avoid. He is already a survival, a person left over from another age. All this is redeemed, though, by the fire or magnetism of his person. In looking at him we must remember what was said of his father, Johann Strauss, the first, by Richard Wagner, who had come to Vienna as a youth of nineteen. He is writing of 1832, more than fifty years ago from the time we see his son. Richard Wagner writes: "The waltz is a more powerful narcotic than alcohol. The very first bars set the whole audience aflame. The thing passes belief. And this amazing Strauss himself, this bewitching fiddler, this spirit incarnate of Viennese popular music, trembles from head to foot, like Pythia on the tripod, at the opening of the piece. The warm summer air in Vienna was full, for me, of little else but Strauss."\* This description by Wagner applies to the son more than to the father. At the time of which he was writing, Beethoven and Schubert had not been dead five years. Fifty years have come and gone, and what had been the sensation of Vienna

\* And, Wagner adds, of the overture to *Zampa*, but the parentheses we may attribute to cynicism on his part.

## *Kitchen Gypsy*

is now known, in the person of his son, to the whole of the civilized world.

But the Spanish blood in Johann Strauss the younger, deriving from his mother, must be taken into account. There was a mystery about his mother's origin. Her name was Anna Strobl, and little more is known about her than that her father had been a cook in the household of the Archduke Albert of Teschen (son of the Emperor Leopold II and brother to the Grand Duke Ferdinand III of Tuscany). He is said to have been a Spanish noble who had to flee his country owing to some scandal in which he became involved. It is, though, not probable that such a person would have found this particular employment. It may be thought more likely that the maternal grandfather of Johann Strauss was a Spaniard, half-Gypsy, perhaps, and half of noble origin, who left his country and wandered to Austria. Some authorities have traced a Spanish-Jewish strain in him, but there would seem to be no serious ground for this, while the mere fact of his being employed in the kitchen points more to the Gypsy than the Jew. In Hungary and in Rumania Gypsy serfs were frequently employed in the kitchens of the great households. Jews are never to be heard of in this capacity, so that the kitchen background means, in all probability, that he was Gypsy. Everything that we are told of the character and appearance of Johann Strauss the younger suggests a strain of the Spaniard and the Gypsy. His darkness, his manner of walking, the peculiar quality of his glance, three things always noticed in him, spoke of the Gitano. And we must remember that he would be ashamed of this, but not, in Vienna at that time, of a little Jewish blood. Gypsies, in the public opinion, were beggars and vagrants. Had he the Gypsy blood of Eastern Europe in him it would have been universally known. On the other hand, the Spanish-Jewish theory is difficult to assign to fact, since, in the eighteenth century, when this romantic ancestor was born, there were no Jews in Spain. Colonies of Sephardim (Spanish Jews) existed as near to Vienna as Belgrade, or in Sarajevo, but that origin, again, would have been known. So, if he was a Spaniard, he cannot have been a Jew and, being a Spaniard, if there was any further mystery about his racial origin, it is probable that the answer is a Gypsy dancer for his mother. And she will have been great grandmother to Johann Strauss.

## *Ephemera*

The qualities, which were his father's, were enhanced by just this amount of Southern blood, giving to this traditionally most typical of Viennese citizens that degree more of fire and impetuosity. Also, aesthetically, or musically, an air of fine breeding, even though this was tinged, in his person, by a hint of the dancing master, by the glitter of the operetta, and we like to think, the swagger of the *Gitano* Johann Strauss was not an intellectual man. His musical culture must have been wide, but he did not read books, or seek the company of writers. Indeed, he suffered from this, lacking a Meilhac or an Halévy, and having more failures than successes upon the stage, owing to the pooriness of his libretti. Perhaps he did not mind this, knowing that their music could be rescued. He has, in fact, been accused of lacking a theatrical sense, of not being, as was his rival Offenbach, a man of the theatre. And, in the sense in which this term fits Offenbach, it is, perhaps, not applicable to Johann Strauss. For the first is a case of musical genius, in its lighter forms, working within the frame of the theatre, while the latter, pre-eminently, is the master of rhythm and of the dance. Yet, such was his power of continual development, he could not be satisfied with constant reiteration and repetition but studied these more ambitious forms and, at fifty years of age, achieved what can only be called one of the lesser masterpieces. Once, or perhaps, twice more in his later life, at sixty years of age, he came near to accomplishing this again. But his successes must not be measured strictly by their popularity. With a person who had attained to his degree of popular acclaim, the very extent of that would obscure other inventions that were hardly less remarkable. There is, as we have attempted to show, as much pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment to be had from an *entr'acte* out of a forgotten operetta, as from *The Blue Danube*, or the *Wiener Wald*. Such an incidental piece is a commentary or reflection upon life from the greatest public entertainer there has ever been, if, that is to say, we are ready to concede that no one has ever served the public with better taste or a more genuine inspiration. His genius communicated itself to those wide circles owing to the intoxicating qualities of his rhythms. And these are as much the results of care and forethought as they are fruits of careless talent. In a preface to his father's collected works, Johann Strauss compares

## Concert Fantasies

the ease with which such music was written in his youth with his present difficulties. The composer who is writing a polka has, now, to approach it like a scientific problem. And, in fact, in order to avoid monotony and so as not constantly to repeat himself he was incessantly experimenting. The business of waltz or dance composition was steadily improving in his hands. In the career of any artist it is, perhaps, necessary that he should try, consciously, to forget most of what he has accomplished in the past. Otherwise, he will remain static.

But seldom is there to be found an instance of so vast a body of ephemeral creations possessed of such merit. In the months before his death, at the age of seventy-four, Johann Strauss had been engaged in sorting out his early and forgotten compositions with a view to embodying them in a new work for the theatre. He died before completing this, and it was finished by another hand. Such is the origin of the delightful *Wiener Blut*. In the forty years since his death, no fewer than four more operettas have been put together out of his scattered pieces, while there is not a ballet company that has not availed itself of the opportunity. *Le Beau Danube*, by Massine, can demonstrate, in itself, the beauty of some of this forgotten music.

The ubiquity of Johann Strauss must include, as well, the body of virtuoso pieces for the piano to which it has given birth. There may be a hundred different arrangements of *The Blue Danube* waltz, but, first and foremost, come the beautiful arabesques of Schultz-Evler, a piece which is played inimitably by Josef Lhevine. The three *Nouvelles Soirées de Vienne* of Tausig, pendants to the Schubert-Liszt *Soirées de Vienne*, are arrangements of early waltzes by Johann Strauss, dating from before *Die Fledermaus*, since Tausig died in 1871. That great pianist Moriz Rosenthal, a favourite pupil of Liszt, still plays two whirling and incredible fantasias, or mosaics, upon Strauss waltzes. We should mention, also, the arrangements of Grunfeld, of Dohnányi, and of Leopold Godowski, the last of whom, in particular, wrote a beautiful fantasy upon *Die Fledermaus*. The contemporary fashion to deny, or denigrate, such virtuoso pieces contradicts itself whenever they are played properly, and takes no notice of the poverty of our time in which even these lesser things are impossible because the original inspiration has gone. They

## *Arabesques*

*remain, therefore, the relics of a happier and a more enlightened age and, whenever we hear them, they must remind us of what we have lost. It is to be remarked, too, that these virtuoso pieces are by no means experiments with the past. Most of them were written during the lifetime of Johann Strauss, himself, those of Tausig, as we have seen, dating from the time before his operatic career had begun. We are unwilling to believe that anyone, for instance, who has heard Moriz Rosenthal play one of his Carnavals de Vienne, at the end of a recital, could deny this evidence of a happier past. Such was popular music while it kept to the European tradition, and was in descent from the old masters. Now, it takes colour from another continent.*

So little has been written in the English language about this person of universal fame that we have delayed for some time upon his portrait, and cannot leave it yet, until more of his character has been revealed. By this, we mean his own person, for his music must be seen through that. His three marriages (it is the middle of the nineteenth century), his known attraction for women, his care for his own personal appearance, to the extent of using artifice, these are important clues to his psychology. He was fastidious in dress and manners, more so than his origin would account for, this, and his dark skin and hair, making Spanish descent, and a mystery at that, more probable. Also, of course, his preoccupation all through his career with the dance hall, dance band musicians, theatre orchestras, impresarios, libretto writers, singers and dancers from operetta, gave to him something of an artificial air. Hairdressers, bull fighters, opera singers, are said to possess this. For Johann Strauss was, we must realize it, a person raised by his genius to a height that was altogether removed from the ordinary limits of his profession. The nineteenth century, which we can so ill afford to mock at from the disordered chaos of the twentieth, found in him one of the splendours of its prosperity and a proof of gaiety and sense of beauty as they can become effective in a huge population. It is something gone for ever from us, and it may be hundreds of years before its parallel, however different in form, can be born again into a contented world.

From all written accounts of him and his orchestra, which are lamentably few and uninforming, it would seem that there is no

## *Strauss as Conductor*

better criticism than what was said of his father by Richard Wagner, referring to a time fifty or even sixty years before the period of which we are speaking. Wagner saw the father in 1832; and we are thinking of 1885, or even of 1895. 'The Waltz is a more popular narcotic than alcohol. The very first bars set the whole audience aflame. And this amazing Strauss himself . . . trembles from head to foot, like Pythia on the tripod, at the opening of the piece. The warm summer air in Vienna was full for me of little else but Strauss.' It is even probable that Richard Wagner, when writing this experience of his own youth, had the younger Strauss in mind. His idiosyncrasy, in conducting, was that indescribable and pregnant beat of his violin bow. This has been compared to the cobra or rattlesnake waiting to strike, and trembling, again as Wagner saw him, in a kind of ecstasy which was, at once, the descent of the Muse upon him, and its communication to musicians and public, the binding of the spell upon them. It was the hypnotic moment, while the frenzy came upon him, the silence in which he seized control of sound. With many musicians of less genuine inspiration, this could have become a mannerism, but we must suppose that, in his case, it was a terrible concentration of mind and soul, an absorption until the intoxication came upon him, and his energy and inspiration were set free. We may think that such rhythm will never be heard again. That world of which it was the pulse or heartbeat has vanished for ever. Now, although we are so near to it in time, it is but a part of the dead past, where all things, however much our imaginations may deny this, are dead together and we must wonder, in some moods, what is our business with them.

The secrets of his speeds, of his phrasing, can never be recovered. Therefore, although his music is left to us, a half of it, or its personal interpretation, is lost. This is his own personality, and enough is known of him to make it certain that he was the great protagonist of his own art. After every performance he was exhausted, and his clothes were wet with perspiration. This, indeed, was the manner of his death, for he caught a chill which developed into pneumonia and killed him. With his death, a name and an idiom passed away that had come to be the equivalent, or synonym, for Vienna during all the seventy years of the nineteenth century since the death of Beethoven and of Schubert.

## *Akzelerationen*

But, as we have attempted to show, its components were, in truth, many other things besides the mere Vienna of convention.

And we live for a few moments longer in the charivari of waltzes. We hear the opening of *Akzeleration*, which, having been written for an engineers' dance, imitates the cranking of an engine; the fly wheel turns round faster and faster; it redoubles its spinning, and runs at a different speed and in another motion; it is in action and travelling and, now, is sublimated into a waltz, moving in what we might call the male-strophe of the dance, and becoming nothing but a waltz for the antistrophe, feminine and languorous, like the picture of the ballroom under the gas lit chandeliers, but with joltings in the rhythm which bring back the cranking, till the tempo quickens, grows fast and faster, and the waltz ends in something of a mounting or triumphant fanfare. Or the small, and lyrical *Donauwiebchen* steals into the mind. This begins with the freshness of a tune by Schubert, and becomes Johann Strauss with the closing or clension of the verse. There follows a lovely and poetical second introduction, almost, as it were, a personal meeting, and we come to the flowing and lyrical subject of the waltz itself, and so, back and forth, until the linkings of the end. *Liebeslieder* is no less delightful, one of the most Viennese, so to speak, of all the waltzes. This also, is essentially a waltz for singing to oneself. It is as careless of melody as Schubert, consisting, according to how you listen to it, of four or six or even eight delightful tunes. *Liebeslieder*, again, is not of the theatre. It is lyrical and spontaneous; its tunes are moods, or even portraits, but so great is the enjoyment of listening to this gracefulness and good humour that the images lose themselves as one melody leads into another.

Johann Strauss is not always thus. The music of *Die Fledermaus* is of another order. These are descendants of the characters in *Nozze di Figaro*. The world of music in which they move, and which is for ever contemporary to themselves, is witness to the high subtlety of that civilization. The graces and gentleness of its decline are the descent or nether slope of music, which was the latest of the arts to have its golden age. Neither fine architecture, nor good painting, are the frame for these figures, but they have attained to a subtlety of manners, a quickness of understanding; and, of all the cities of the nineteenth century that

## Other Waltzes

were to rise in population to a million or more, there is only this in testimony. All the others are in the slough of slum life with no contemporary virtues, no saving graces of their time. The elegance of every phrase is of that world, in its decline or autumn, which descended from the Augustan age of the late seventeenth century, over most of Europe, and is as though no word of Robespierre, of Danton, of Marat, had come to them. Who is there, now, who would not envy them in this? To sleep through that cataclysm, and be gone before worse befell! Tragedy is impending in the hectic music of *La Vie Parisienne*. There is no hint of it in Johann Strauss. And the czardás of *Die Fledermaus* takes us to an agreeable world of which this is the first mention in this composer's works. But it was not the first time that this dashing rhythm was naturalized in the theatre. That had been done, three or four years before, on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, by Leo Delibes in his enchanting ballet *Coppélia*, and it would be interesting to know whether Johann Strauss knew this other masterpiece of a lesser or secondary order. In *Die Fledermaus*, the czardás is less of an exotic, the scene is not, as in *Coppélia*, 'somewhere on the borders of Galicia', and the czardás is sung as well as danced. Here, it is indigenous, and its echoes raise no improbability in the mind. After *Die Fledermaus* it is only natural to hear, in memory, the music of *Zigeunerbaron*. The overture is, in itself, a beautiful thing, with one melody in it of a divine or Arcadian simplicity, but perverted to the stage, a sort of rocking or swinging air, an 'escarpolette' under the green trees of the scene. There are so many beauties in *Zigeunerbaron* and the enchantment of a vanished world, of 1884, even in the theatre. Everyone knows the Schatz Waltz. There are the great finales in Hungarian time, embodying, as we have said before, the Rakoczy march, and, as well, the march of the *Zigeunerbaron*, in itself the ne plus ultra of light theatrical music. This has the form, at first hearing, of a march by Schubert, but the theatre comes in with the unfolding of its plan, which is so obviously designed for a stage army. The soldiers were dancers, in the last scene, of the czardás. This is, at the same time, one of those pieces of music which transfer themselves so easily from the theatre to the bandstand. And there, perhaps, it is even more of the theatre than when played before the scene.



## *Valses by Delibes*

After this, to anyone who loves the music of Johann Strauss, it is only natural to come back to such masterworks of elegance and urbanity as *Wo die Citronen blühen*, written, as is suggested in its title, during a visit of the composer to Italy, but with no more of the South to it than an addition of suavity and nostalgia to its Viennese rhythms. *Feuer echt des Lebens* floats upon the mind. This, again, is Viennese, in the sense in which *Canaletto* is Venetian, its light, its colour, the breath of wind upon it, all belonging to that history and being a part of its substance and fabric. And we get, one after another, all the openings of the waltz; the start by concealment, hiding what is coming; the gentle sliding into the rhythm of it, the mechanical opening, a mere tag or convention that improves and blossoms and becomes an entity, a living body, with the linking of its tunes, that wonderful and simple beginning, most typical of all, where nothing but the time of the waltz is given by the strings and the Hungarian cymbalon; and the dithyrambic pause, that moment of magic in which he trembles from head to foot, in ecstasy, and darts like a serpent into the mazes of the waltz. Such are the great concert waltzes *Frühlingstimmen*, *Roses of the South*; *Wein, Weib und Gesang*, the tunes from *Die Fledermaus*, and there is the sudden quickening, the intoxication of rhythm, when the waltz begins, in the overture to some forgotten operetta and, in the later ones, is phrased no more than once, but enough to haunt the mind, and does not come again.

But the waltz neither begins nor ends with Johann Strauss. It is not only Austrian or German. If it be not hypocritical to call the waltzes of Waldteufel by the name of vales, we may hear in them the difference between Longchamps Fleuri,\* delightful by its name alone, and this music from the Danube, which flows into the Black Sea and faces towards Tartary. But Waldteufel was of no nation. He came, like Offenbach, from across the Rhine, and settled in Paris, and became a Frenchman. If you want French music, born in France, listen to Delibes. There are the vales from *Coppélia* and *Sylvia*, the enchanting *Naïla*, all of them in an idiom entirely his own, except for some echoes of Rossini in the modulations of *Naïla*. The mimosa-laden valse of *Coppélia*, beginning with the very first bars of the first act of that ballet, can cause us

\* A valse which has been 'rescued' by Mr. Constant Lambert

## *The Waltz of Tchaikowsky*

to forget Johann Strauss. Nevertheless, the little world of Delibes is confined strictly within its own limits. The *Naïla* valse, which is a 'pas des fleurs', gives the effect of that apparent ease which is so deceptive with Delibes, who took infinite pains before this flowing surface was achieved. Anyone fortunate enough to have had the experience of hearing Vladimir de Pachmann play the arrangement of this valse by Dohnányi, which he did for an encore piece, will have known this music in the perfection of which it is capable. It has all the mannerisms of Delibes, though these are, apparently, so open and natural that we scarcely realize they are the conventions of the stage and dictated to him, in all probability, by the great choreograph, Saint-Léon, who designed this ballet of *La Source*, in 1866. As to the performance of this valse by de Pachmann, we can only say that he treated it in the manner in which he played the music of Mendelssohn and of Weber, and that this, more than Chopin, was the music in which he excelled. The subhuman nuances and delicacies of his touch can never have been approached by any other pianist, and they were particularly suited to this valse of Delibes.

But Delibes had an imitator who excelled him, that is to say his admirer, who was fierier, more sensuous and more complicated in temperament, based his method upon that of Delibes but carried it, in the results, into an altogether different world of expression. The waltz from *Casse-Noisette* is of a hothouse exoticism to which Delibes could never attain, by reason of his normality and balance. Its opening phrase gives its extremes of climate which, apart from the contrast of tropical heat with what might be the snow outside, or the contradiction between wealth and poverty, has the burden or implication of danger and suffering, as though this were a forbidden intoxication, some release, we cannot doubt it, of the composer's hidden feelings. His genius for the theatre, or rather for the dance, first comes to our ears in childhood, for *Casse-Noisette*, with most persons, is the earliest music we remember, and this introduction to a world of trance and delirium is a dangerous pleasure for which we must ever be thankful to the muse of Tchaikowsky. The valse from *La Belle au Bois Dormant* is a delight of another nature. But who, among those who love such things, will ever forget the excitement of that opening, a separate body in itself in its crescendo and its

## *Eugene Onegin*

waning, followed by the birth of the waltz, suave and romantic, and after the full delights of those few moments the return of the full waltz and the ornamented splendour of its finish. This waltz should be seen danced as it was in the revival by Diaghilev at the Alhambra Theatre, in 1921. Its background was a garden scene based by Bakst upon his studies of the Bibiena, consisting of a great colonnade in hemicycle, reminiscent of the colonnades in front of Sans Souci, with terraces and clipped hedges rising steeply at the back, and more colonnades and fountains in architectural perspective. This waltz of Tchaikowsky inhabited the scene more than its own contemporary music could have done, more than the arias or choruses of Alessandro Scarlatti, more than Lully, more than any other composer of that time. But even more characteristic of Tchaikowsky is the waltz from *Eugene Onegin*. It may be considered doubtful whether we shall ever see this music properly performed in England, for its atmosphere, its evocations, its very attitudes, come from the full Romanticism of Russian literature in the time of Pushkin, who cannot be translated. All we can tell, from inference and from information, is the genius with which Tchaikowsky has put this period of Romanticism into music. Its sensual appeal is doubled or reflected, for we see him and his period, 1880 in 1830, like the lights in the mirrors by which the ballroom scene is lit. The waltz from *Eugene Onegin* begins with mounting excitement and much preluding, a habit which is as typical with Tchaikowsky as the crescendo of Rossini. It is as though we approached nearer and nearer to the windows of the ballroom, an illusion which is presented to us by the first bars of the waltz and by the raising of the curtain, and through the windows we see the couples turning and turning. But let us recapitulate the play, for, in so doing, we will understand the music.

In the first scene Madame Lerin and her nurse are making preserves in the garden of a Russian country house. In a few moments we hear a duet from inside the windows. It is Tatiana and her sister Olga singing to the harp. The peasants now come on the scene, carrying with them the last sheaves of the harvest, and we have their songs and dances. Guests are announced. They are Lensky, a young neighbour, who has just come from a German university, and Eugene Onegin, a dandy from St. Peters-

## *The Play*

burg, disillusioned, and an admirer of Lord Byron. The guests, of course, are staying for supper, and while Madame Lerin and the old nurse are busy with their orders, Lensky and Olga, Tatiana and Onegin, wander in the garden.

In the second scene of this act, Tatiana is sitting in her room by moonlight. The old nurse comes to scold her for not being asleep. She confesses her love for Onegin, and persuades her old nurse to hand to him a letter that she has written. In the next scene, Tatiana and Onegin meet in the garden. He is too cynical and disillusioned to understand the simplicity and directness of her nature, and will do no more than give her advice not to write such letters and to behave with more reserve. He shows no interest in her, and leaves her in the garden.

It is the second act which opens with the ballroom scene. The occasion is the birthday of Tatiana, and Lensky has brought Onegin to the ball. We hear the wonderful and sinister opening of the waltz. Onegin, who has been brought here against his will, dances with Olga and will scarcely speak to Tatiana. Lensky, who is madly jealous, insults him and forces a challenge upon him. The guests leave the ballroom in horror. The next scene is the duel, in which Lensky is killed by Onegin. But, before we return to the waltz, we must conclude the opera. In the third act it is many years later. It is a soirée in a big house in St. Petersburg. Onegin has come back from long exile abroad. He stands apart, aloof and unhappy, still grieving for the friend he killed. Everyone, but him, is excited, awaiting the arrival of a famous beauty, Princess Gremin. It is, of course, Tatiana, with her husband. The last scene of the opera is in the boudoir of the Princess. Tatiana is reading a love letter from Onegin, who has just realized his true feelings. Suddenly, Onegin arrives. They sing a passionate duet together, and he tries to force her to elope with him. She will not, for she has altered, and loves her husband. But she changes, and begins to confess her love for him. She runs from the room. The curtain falls, and Onegin is left alone on the stage.

Such is the opera of *Eugene Onegin*. There is much beautiful music in it, arias and duets, and a stirring polonaise, that is Russian in form and distinct from the Polish. But it is the waltz to which our minds return. We have described its formal opening

## *The Duel of Pushkin*

and how, to the tune of the waltz, we see the couples turning and turning. This is no country ball. It can only be in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg. And now, with the second subject, the rhythm is that of a skating waltz, but it is only in suggestion. The full tune of the waltz comes back and is leading to the climax. It is treated by the brass instruments almost as if it were a polonaise, or a great figure which must take a minute, or half a minute, to complete. And the coda comes more and more exciting with its stabs and flourishes. It is turning, turning, on the ice, in the ballroom, under the palms and the exotic plants. It throws out, as it were, ropes or stays to steady its descent, for so great a body of movement cannot stop at once. And like a living thing, its cheeks and eyes aflame, the fanfares lower it till it comes to rest. The waltz has ended.

There is a curious prophetic quality in the plot of *Eugene Onegin*, so far as Pushkin, himself, is concerned. In the play, Onegin and Lensky are in love with two sisters, Tatiana and Olga. Onegin, the hero, kills Lensky in a duel. In his own life, the poet Pushkin and Baron d'Anthes, a Frenchman, were married to two sisters. Pushkin suspected an intrigue between his wife and his brother-in-law. He challenged Baron d'Anthes and, in the ensuing duel, was killed by him. The plot, in fact, except for a different ending, is the same. When, forty years later, Tchaikowsky came to write the incidental music for the play, his inspiration, we cannot doubt it, was this double drama. Also, the composer may have put much hidden drama of his own into the music. It is this which gives to the music of *Eugene Onegin* its peculiar intensity, and a neatness, an absence of sentiment and a predominance of passion or pure emotion, that is rare in Tchaikowsky. We must remember his love for Pushkin's writings. Pushkin and Glinka, both of them belonging to the generation only before his own, had been the founders of Russian poetry and music. Tchaikowsky, who was a poor letter writer, and who changed his enthusiasms every few days, never failed to express his constant admiration for Pushkin and for Glinka in his correspondence. It is significant that the most successful of Tchaikowsky's operas, after *Eugene Onegin*, should, also, have been written to a play by Pushkin. This is *Pique Dame*, of which the first scene, laid in the Summer Garden at St. Petersburg,

## *Pique Dame*

with the choruses of nursemaids and governesses and the jeunesse dorée of the capital, who are taking the spring air, has much in common with the opening of *Eugene Onegin*. There is, too, a fancy dress ball in the second act; and throughout the opera, although its setting is in the eighteenth century, we get that flavour of the Russia of Nicholas I, which, to Tchaikowsky, was a golden age. In *Eugene Onegin*, the disillusion and introspection sent into the world by Lord Byron are personified in the hero. And, in the hands of Pushkin, it was a new discovery, with a new world to play in. The implications of this are as difficult to comprehend as so many lost literary allusions. It is, even, in its most direct meaning, a question of the posing of the actors on the scene. No English company of singers could know the correct attitudes or movements. For *Eugene Onegin* is something as distinctively national as a cricket match. We know what a parody that would be upon a foreign stage, and it is the same with this. The Romanticism of *Eugene Onegin* is a part of Russian tradition. It cannot be imitated, but has to be bred in the actor. The St Petersburg of Nicholas I must be in the bones of those who play these scenes.

The set numbers of Tchaikowsky are so many inspired illustrations of the play. But they are more than that. For they raise it from a foreign language, and a personal idiom that cannot be translated, into universal intelligence. No one who has once tasted this mood can lose it out of his poetical recollections. It is another shade, a new colour, in the repertory of tones. And that this is due as much to the composer as to the poet is but another tribute to a great musician. The sophistication of the waltz is, of course, something of an anachronism. For, in the 'thirties, the ballroom waltzes were little more than hurdygurdy tunes. This, by contrary, is the full waltz of the Tchaikowsky ballet, but its more complicated machinery has been made the vehicle for all the emotions of the play. From its first notes we hear the impending tragedy. And the Byronic hero speaks through the music with more effect than ever in his own writings, for Byron was only the beginning of his own legend. Taken by Pushkin to these Northern shores, to the birch forests and the snows, to the salons of St. Petersburg, it has become native, and is suited in these contradictions of place and clime. The exotic conditions have

## *Restaurant on the Island*

favoured its development; and yet, opposed to it, but a part of it, we have its counterstrain of purity and virginity, the heart or simplicity of the Biedermeier, a setting which is implicit to the experienced but disillusioned, hero of the piece. These are the essential contradictions of that age. The tophatted, tailcoated hero moves among the naked statues of Thorvaldsen and Canova, against a frigid classical architecture which has furniture of satin-wood, flowered Bessarabian carpets, painted china. Young girls and married women are ringletted, with wide sleeves. It is, perhaps, the Karelian country, just beyond the capital. Here, Onegin kills Lensky. And, fifty years later, the composer dined with his nephew, and others, at one of the restaurants upon the islands. On the table stood a carafe of water which had not been boiled, although there was an epidemic in the capital. He knew this; but poured out a glass of water, drank it to its dregs, and died, a few days later, of cholera. Whether that fatal draught was taken on purpose, or through carelessness, will never be known. It may well have been deliberate, for he took his secrets with him to the grave.

### III

We stay in this restaurant for a while, and see them in the corner. For this is a summer place of amusement and, in a day or two, it will close down for the winter. Already, it is the end of October or beginning of November. One or two persons come in and join them. It is growing late, and at about 2 a.m. they get up and leave the restaurant. We are in an interregnum, neither happy nor unhappy, in which we will wander where we please, choosing our company, and with only so much of the mood of the evening that we know this for the half-world, for a place of waiting where we pass the night or day.

Once more, we must recall that many painters and poets have died in this company, in their own times. They lived in the present, in to-day and yesterday: never nearer to to-morrow. It is the world of plurality, for all men in their profane or pagan souls must admit to more than one ideal. That antique group or con-

## *Presentment*

ception of The Three Graces, which several great painters and sculptors have made their subject, is of curious import towards this universal truth. For such a grouping is only possible, aesthetically, if its three figures are all taken from the same model. Then, the harmony of their interflowing curves and lines springs from the same fountain foot, and the counterpoint of their comparisons is based upon that identical theme or motive. This is a fulfilment, in practice, of that desire to see the object of our admiration, as it were, in simultaneous vision. The one presentment, the living reality, is not enough. We want to have the picture of her in every alternative at one and the same time. The clothes that she is wearing this morning, in the summer street, must be supplemented by her evening figure with bare shoulders. Often, the same person, in a long dress that sweeps upon the ground, and with her hair dressed in a different fashion for the evening, is hardly to be known for the girl of the same morning. The transition can be complete and absolute. The nymph whom we saw swimming in the pool, who lay kicking her limbs under the water, while she held with one hand to the rail, and smiled up at us with wet lips and the water running down her face, now wears a dress that masks her feet and legs. Or this evening phantom with her long waist, with hair curled upon her temples, with lovely back and appetizing shoulders upon which the lights shine, will, next morning, throw off that sheath or chrysalis and come out from it like the engine or machinery of her own fascination. Her limbs, for the beautiful is never revealed as too thin or slender, stand at the edge and go down into the water in perfection of emphasis upon their individual being. Such are the secrets of her emergence into the morning. Their effect is to enhance or put stress upon the animal. She walks upon the earth and is not cast in metal. It would be easy to paint or model from this person into the triple goddess; Januslike she must face towards and away from us, but she can never appear except in this one identity. It would be invidious to hang the masks of night and morning upon her.

And now the miracle happens! Slowly, slowly, it climbs out of the earth. It grows like the magical flower in a pantomime or ballet. First seen, her three heads with their golden locks are at knee height, which allows of a clear view being had of their combed and glistening fronds, fresh from the smoking tongs of



## *Presentment*

the hairdresser, wet and crisp in their curls, and shining in particles as though, at the last moment, they had been dusted with fine gold. There are not too many of these. They are few in number and lie close to the head. The flat shell of the ear, nearly lobeless, and attached to the side of the head in a place and at an angle which is a fascination in itself, is just below them. It is, even, in emblem of intelligence and beauty. Now we get to her eyes, which can be green or brown, for not, of necessity, with this fair hair need they be blue. She can laugh with them as well as with her lips, and they are the windows of her heart and wit. Next, we have her cheeks, which show the subtlety of the bone beneath the flesh. They are cut and shaped in poignant, not to be mistaken, personality. Her mouth, after her hair, is the only animal thing. All the rest has been her mind and soul. But her lips are more than human, this is the flesh eating, the carnivorous animal, to be entered among the animals that are eaters of flesh. Her mouth is the sensual attraction, and her lower lip, which is a little full, provokes or likes to be provoked. It is key or interpreter to her animal nature. But look up again into her eyes! And take delight in her nose, which is personal but not emphasized, and of which the tip partakes agreeably, but perceptibly, in all conversation, moving up and down in a precision that it is a delight to watch. And, by now, this triple caryatid has lifted out of the earth to such a height that its three heads stand at their normal stature. Her neck is the stem, or foot stalk, joining the flower to the body, of a length and moulding that invites the hand. Her shoulders are recognizably the same as those which made the effect, or surprise of the evening, when the lights picked out shining points upon her shoulderblades, emphasizing their rather masculine strength or breadth, and drawing attention to their burnt or tawny fairness. It is from this point that animal beauty or enchantment begins. This is the body of a savage. It is not pale like bread or milk. Yet it has the cast of sculpture, as if made of metal. And it breathes. It swells with breath. Its heart is beating underneath its skin. The lines of this machine or engine express the irritation or bite of her physical beauty. Nothing but the mimic death of her could quench, could satisfy this thirst. The figure of this statue, seen in its triple alternations, is one of nature's most miraculous inventions, and an only instance in

## *Caryatid*

which she has mingled her blood with that of man. For, as a rule, nature is inimical or casual to our laws, but, here, such knowledge of them is exhibited as only the most human of mortal beings could possess. Her breasts are in affirmation of feminine softness, for below them, her waist swells into bodily and nearly masculine roundness. Like every wonderful invention this is at once big and small. It is firm and of substance, and following round its shape, like a statue you can turn about in your hands, it surprises, now, by its neat smallness, its vulnerable littleness. The legs of this statue are in canonic proportion to her waist. Each is a separate individual, a twin entity posed in magical communion with her sister. They are impeccable from every angle, until a fresh turn of the caryatid builds a new harmony from the assonance or dissonance of their curves. In midst of this, the joints of her knees make the pause or articulation of their beauty, which begins again here, where is generally the height to which they can be admired. Their line of beauty descends down out of the revelation of those fuller delights into her ankles, which arch into a dancer's instep, ending in the reddened nails that make you look up at her hands. And, now, this triple statue, this caryatid, or goddess, stands naked and entire, reaching to your shoulders.

In metamorphosis, her pale skin that was only fiery in the south and that, like moonlight, had no warmth and only an echoed light as in a mirror, or upon the water, will be changed for the authentic saffron, the smoky undertone of heat. This, like a salamander, lies in the very fire, on the midday beach, or on the burning boards. The hot sands are her background, or the deck that has no awning. But, besides this sunning of her limbs and body, her changeable and sultry temperament allies her to the solstice. It is a climate, though, that never thunders. Like those lands on the Equator it is cold without the sun. And this has the amenity that she is animal, and not an empty husk or shell. This is inhabited. It can suffer and give pain. But her unhappiness was part discontent, and this only made the finish or augmentation to her physical beauty. For it exactly suited the provocation of her looks, her sullen colour, and her red, red lips. This was the mould of defence or attack into which the molten metal had been poured. It was her temperament to be taken in a storm; or lazy and sulky, pretending not to care, in revenge, perhaps, for some failure with another.

### *Porteress, or Lay Sister*

Her slow and casual fire, in its results upon persons, was of a strength that had no precedent. This was because of the exceptional quality of that machinery of war. There is no such weapon, no such net of entanglement, as fair hair with a dark or tawny skin. It is a perversion of truth, as would be snow upon hot flowers of the tropics. And it has that purposeful or deliberate beauty that comes from the exaggeration of something that was a merit before, as in limbs that are a little longer than the canon of proportion and, so, come into an attraction of their own. This burnt and sulphurous skin, ever smoky, as of smoke upon the gloss of vellum, was that thing from which neither eyes nor soul could ever recover. That, and the long stem of her neck, with the unreal attenuation of her waist swelling into her lyrelike hips, her masculine shoulders, her long feline or feminine back, her thighs, and her legs that had the muscles of a male dancer, such was this rare being. This was the warm, the torrid embodiment, the fiery body in the heat of fire. It was the Siculo-Norman, the fair locks in the vineyard and on the mountain slope, the burnt body by the almond bough, against the snow of Etna. And, this being her background in history and in race, we relate her to the present of high speed motors, of journeys by aeroplane across the age of gold.

Who would know this person below her mask, beneath her black net gloves? She is the porteress, or lay sister at the door. We have unmasked her, stripped her nude, but she only smiles and pushes back a coin to you by that black gloved hand. There is only this of recognition. And yet, this phantom has been put here for yourself alone. To other persons she is nothing, no more than a lay sister, or a porteress. We shall see, later, to what fantasies this leads us. And we watch her push a coin to another person, and smile at him. This gives us, immediately, the key or liberty of the half-world. It is the pagan world. Besides, we have already paid a coin.

## *The Fondouk*

salt. Some of the whitewashed alleys are roofed with trellises of vines. In the distance you could see the snowy mountains. You pass a dark archway and, coming back to it, step down into its black and fetid vaults. The floor is a quagmire of mud and water. There are mules and donkeys, many men, and a blind beggar or two, their long staffs in their hands, mumbling in the darkness. Beyond this, blue sky and an open courtyard. This has an arcade round it, with little rooms like cells and, above, a wide balcony with the doorways of other dens or habitations. It is the Fondouk.

The countrymen come in here with their merchandise. They stay a night, two nights, in some cell along the corridors. Their mules and donkeys are tied up in the courtyard. There is even a camel tethered to a stone. It is an inn, a place of business, and a haunt of pleasure. Some Fondouks have pierced balconies or lattices of many storeys. This is more simple. Its only luxury is the heat and light, and there can be satiety of both. But this is enough description of the Fondouk and the Moors. We are in this brilliant courtyard, but its importance to our narrative lies in the association of images linked together because of their interdependence and as part of their poetical system. This is, in terms of astronomy, the nucleus of these moods or fancies. They spring from sights or sounds, though inspired always by the inner feelings, so that in the mere difference of Fondouk, or Fonduk, there could be a chapter written. So let us play, in the first place, with the music of that name. Fondouk, heyduck, such words are not of our world, their smell and sound are of the Orient. But we will forget heyduck, although it started us upon this journey in the sun. And now we see that there are not only Moors in the courtyard of the Fondouk. There are a number of women in bright coloured dresses. Some look down from the wide balcony, others come out through the arches. What we notice are the yellows, pinks, or greens that they are wearing. They have necklaces of coins, long silver earrings, and bangles on their wrists. While they move, there is a noise and clink of metal. Their dresses have long sleeves and full skirts. They walk barefoot, and their heads are bound up in a cotton handkerchief tied into a cap or turban. They are the women of the Fondouk, at the disposal of the men who come here.

It is a beautiful sight to see them in the bright sunlight looking

## *Nuns of the Fondouk*

down from above the arches. They sit on the whitewashed parapet; and some of them are combing their black hair. Others come out from their cells and stretch themselves as if they have just woken, although it is late morning. It is as though their whole lives were spent on that terrace, or in the dark dens behind it. Their freedom of movement, right before our eyes, is the more remarkable in this Moslem land where the women are all veiled. Down below here, in the court, they are laughing and chattering, and looking at the strangers. When they walk they have the stride of Gypsies. They come near to us, and we observe that they have tribal tattoo marks upon their foreheads and, sometimes, at the corners of their lips. Moreover, their eyelashes are painted and it may, or may not be, a touch of rouge upon their cheeks. For they are young, most of them from fourteen to twenty years old, while certain old and withered hags who are in control of them may be thirty, but not more.

Not one of the young girls is a negress. Even those upon the terrace can be seen to have the round faces of country villages. They are Berbers from the mountain tribes, probably Chleuh, who have sold themselves and come down to the town. Their price is a few centimes. In colour they are dark or burnt olive, which shows itself in their hands and wrists, that are always well-shaped. And we see that the soles of their bare feet are painted red with henna. It is a new population in this land of hooded women. There was no sign, nor sight of it, until we came out from the archway into this sunny cloister.

What is characteristic in the nuns of the Fondouk is their solemnity, or laughter. For there are no moods in between. They cannot be vulgar. They are grave and dignified: or laughing. Most of them smoke cigarettes, a conspicuous clue to their moral character, and walk about hand-in-hand with a friend, like school-girls, or the common soldiers in a company of Amazons. They are off duty, out of lessons, but at any moment, or for any individual, her services may be needed. Yet this is the rest hour, the long and hot siesta of the South. Their duties begin in the afternoon and last into the morning.

Not a flower, not a tree, not a palm, grows in the court. It is bare, of no tints but the whitewash and the colours of the air. The rooms or cells have no furniture, at most a mattress, or a

## *The Typhus Town*

heap of rags. These are their homes, who have had little better in their mountain villages. They live here for a few months, or a year or two, fall ill, improve themselves, or go back home and marry. But they leave it as they found it, like the dove her wooden cage, or the dog his kennel. They are mere animals. They leave no soul behind them. Their ghosts would not haunt the cells. Or, if they did, a living replica, of no difference, would be dwelling there, and would come out of that darkness into the sunlight of the terrace, join her sisters in their bright colours, and walk in the court below among the mules and donkeys and the bales of merchandise. The Fondouk has no age. It has stood here for ever. For five years, or for fifty, or for five hundred years. It has always been the same. And if, for the Moors, it is an inn, a Fondouk, this school or convent is no prison for its women, although they never go outside the walls. They have no medicine. No doctor ever comes to visit them. One of the older women buys their food, and markets for them. If they fall ill, they die, or are disfigured. So we see them in health and not in sickness, whatever may be hidden, or may lurk within their blood.

They have come down from their mountains to the metropolis, to the typhus town. Every winter there is typhus. It comes up from the south, and is brought here by the countrymen. And from this interior court they can see nothing. There are no other buildings in the sky, not a house, nor minaret, though the voice calls down to them in the dawn, and at midday, when everyone is sleeping, stretched upon the ground. But it is a faith, in any case, for men and not for women. We need have no sentiment for them. They have none, themselves. They are mere animals, the lowest of their low profession. And yet, in these sad lands where all the women are veiled, it is some compensation, some gift of liberty, to see the round faces of these self-sold slaves. At least, this is love without its cares and agonies. It can kill, by disease, but it cannot still the heart. Nor quicken it. The dirt and squalor of the Fondouk cannot, though, destroy its beauty for the eyes. And it has more than that. We hear, from some hidden place among the arches, a snatch of one of the songs that are heard all over the town, though it is, doubly, in a language that we do not understand, for it is impossible to remember its turns and modulations. The more you think of it, the quicker it goes from you.

### *Mercutio's Speech*

It is as elusive as if you were in love with it. You can remember other music heard but once, and many years ago, while this, which has just ended, and may begin again, dies from over care, from too much thinking of it

This is Atlantic Africa. You may miss the fountains and guitars of Spain. This is more solemn and more silent, though the voices are like turkeycocks Their speech is a gobbling, gobbling, never far from anger The muleteers are ever quarrelling, night and day, in this court of the Fondouk But it is so distant, so remote, even in its noisy town. We are reminded of Mercutio's speech:

*True, I talk of dreames,  
Which are the children of an idle braine,  
Begot of nothing but vaine fantasy  
Which is as thin of substance as the ayre,  
And more inconstant than the wind, who wooes  
Even now the frozen bosome of the North,  
And being anger'd, puffes away from thence,  
Turning his face to the dew-dropping South.*

How, we may wonder, could a man have written this who had never been to the South, for the last line of our quotation cannot be mistaken in its light and sound, though his South is more lyrical. This is the bare bones of the South His are the halcyon valley, the hill of cypresses, this is no more than whitewashed walls and the colours of the air But it is more Southern than the Mediterranean, Andalucia or Sicily are but legends, this is close upon the sands So the beauty of the Fondouk, for ourselves, must lie in how near its sordidness or misery are to the last flowers or fountains, the ultimate shade of the dew-dropping South.

Look again at those bright dresses, those cotton turbans! The mere fact that these women are not veiled puts them into another sex from the hooded women of the streets and alleys. And this we must feel whenever we see women on the flat roofs of the houses at sunset, when they take the air; or can look down into a court and see them, barefoot and unveiled, at their household duties. This is the hour of the Alameda, of the mantilla, 'where the vanilla coloured ladies ride', here, they can only climb up to the terraces and talk from roof to roof Those are the veiled ones; but the

## *The Flowering Court*

women of the Fondouk are unveiled at any hour, and this gives to them the audacity of a troupe of strolling players, of a tribe of Gypsies. They are beyond the rules of life; and this liberty speaks in their every movement. We see it in their limbered walk and in their brazen attitude before the stranger; even if it is belied in their grave expression. They are priestess or sorceress; and the person who only comes for a few moments into their cloister will take away with him the memory of their dignity and their wild, untrammelled walk.

Vain fantasy would have us ask further of their origin and see them, in fancy, by the last flowers of the dew-dropping South. Their turbans and coloured dresses have the Gitana and, as well, the touch of Tartary or Persia, but it is only because Islam, from end to end, has an affinity and the breath of its old past. For this is Africa and the Atlantic. The white ibis flies above the court and, if you listen, there is a clacking, as of reed or quill, which is the stork upon her nest who makes this marsh music with the clattering of her beak. A blue shadow of a figtree strikes upon the wall, leafless, but with the gnarling of its branches. Aromatic wood burns in a brazier. The scented charcoal breathes upon the air, neither noxious nor perfumed, but peculiarly scented, of Orient Africa, though Western as Galway, or as the stones of Carnac. You cannot, further to the West, nor South. This is the end of two dimensions. It is the Atlantic to one side and, on the other, nothingness, the sea of sand. There is nothing beyond it. What lies there is no more the South. It belongs to another world and is the black man's land, the naked negro Africa.

In this town of the Fondouk there are courts of honeycomb and stalactite, the hand of Andalucia from Cordoba and Granada. There are groves of orangetrees; the magnolia would open its waxy flowers and exhale their scented breath, lemon throated, creamy petalled, from among the broad and shining leaves. In summer the whole court would breathe of jasmine. That is for the dogdays; now, in the early year, the blue or purple bougainvillea colours the whitewashed walls. The wistaria trellis makes a cage or lattice of its honeyed blue fires. There will be the blue paulownia; and the jacaranda that sheds its leaves, and is tall as a branched chestnut tree with candles of blue flame. All these, and many more, could flower in the Fondouk. Or we can build it, in



## *The Flowering Court*

fancy, on the blue seashore, open to the winds, in a white pirate town. The fishing boats, curved like a sickle or a scimitar, pitch and toss upon the back of the blue monster. So vast is the Atlantic Ocean that even its midday calm is troubled. And, at sunset, the white sails blow in like swallows, cutting and tacking below the eaves of the white houses

The rest of the town, if it be Sallee, has its hooded women who show no more than one eye, like daughters of the Cyclops. Their white wrapped forms, hooded in their burnouses, are ghosts or shadows along the whitewashed alleys. They walk so slowly, and so silently, the folds of the burnouse held closely with one hand. There is only that one eye showing, and a pair of hands. And so they go, like ghosts, into the shadows of their houses. It is a town of fanatics and religious zealots. But all this is changed within the Fondouk. And we allow our fancy to play upon their turbans and bright colours. We take away that court again to the hottest of the South. Here, too, we build it in luxury, giving silks for cottons. They have silken turbans and silken dresses. They walk barefoot, with henna'd feet, or upon pattens, the chioppines of Hamlet. Their fingertips, and not their fingernails, are henna'd. And we can have music and dancing. But it is still the Fondouk. They are imprisoned by the freedom of their morals, for ever priestess or sorceress, human, but not like other human beings, a race apart, the Gitanas or bayadères of the town. Where do they come from? The mysterious and unknown South. From little red-walled towns, with flat-roofed houses of one storey where they live, or are brought down by tribesmen from the mountains. They are trained in schools of music and of dancing, or go to the bare Fondouk to earn their living from the whitewashed walls and wooden floors. These, however, have silken gowns down to their feet, a mandoline in their hands, or little bells upon their fingers. They are a company, a troupe of dancers, and we would see them coming out from the arches into the moonlight, or bowing their heads, and stooping, to pass below the orangetrees. They are sitting, crosslegged, or one of them dances, as if chained upon the ground, never lifting her feet

It is a dress which flatters darkness and a smooth or tawny skin. And it darkens, darkens. Here are no blonde maidens from under the lumetrees or the lindens. It darkens, yet lightens, for it

## *Cheeks of Vermilion and Gold*

must not be too dark. It can be coffee-coloured, in deeper or lighter shades, of eggshell smoothness. There is beauty in the cutting of the eyelids, in the straight nose, small lips, and in the dressing of the hair, which can have a classical mode, in descent from old Egypt. Beautiful, too, are the thin wrists and ankles. They are the daughters of slaves; or come from the pastoral lands of the negro, between the crab and capricorn, from kingdoms, not of Nile, but Niger. There, in the meadows, they wear dresses of bright dyes, and, in a long line, go down to the river and carry up the waterjars. They walk back, slowly, with the pitchers on their heads, as straight and firm as peasant girls at the Roman fountain. It is a pastoral land of wide-horned cattle, a land of milk and honey. They have been stolen from its riches and brought here in their misery, but that was in another generation, in the old slave wars. They have forgotten that, while the others are their guests, for they are here but in our imagination. We will pass the long hours of light with them in that interior life, knowing that never again shall we come here, or spend an afternoon like this. It is a court of orangetrees, with empty rooms that lead off it and have no furniture, nothing but rugs and divans. But the quality of it lies in the heat and light, in the blue sky and the fanning of the dove's white wings, in the scented blossom, in the strange and unfamiliar beauty.

Some of the young girls, not the negresses, have round spots of vermillion upon their cheeks, below their painted eyes, upon which little shapes, like frost flowers, have been traced in gold. This does not make them look like dolls, for they turn so quickly, and because of the movements of their dark wrists and hands. They have the air of little painted brides, for they have been dressed and painted so elaborately. The secret is that they have nothing else to do. They will spend whole days at this, and weeks or months at their embroidery. Even so, their painted cheeks are a thing that we have never seen before. They have round, smooth faces, and foreheads which are bare below their turbans. Their long silken dresses fall below their knees, and they have wide silken trousers to the ankle, and feet with henna'd soles. They have nothing to do but sit or lie about, like animals in cages. Perhaps it is their foreheads and smooth faces, the concealment of their limbs, that give to them a heterosexual air, neither girl

### *The Sable, or the Jetty Shades*

nor boy, and the hint of a Persian miniature, though their faces have not the joined eyebrows that were loved in Persia. We would rather look at them in an exotic light, in kiosques of porcelain, near to the flowered tiles, for the lights of china would be holding up a mirror to the matt smoothness of their faces, but it must be blue and white Delft china, like a Vermeer interior, and not any more the arabesque and intricacy of the Orient. The light can be thrown through shutters, or through the boughs outside, or they can stand in the falling light and we will watch their shadows on the wall. It is wonderful, in imagination, to have them standing in the golden sun motes, while we see what of the Orient answers from the whitewashed wall in this tawny light of Africa, all golden from the sands.

But the sable, or the jetty shadows come. First of all as serving maids. There is a young negress in a pink cotton dress, who has folded a yellow cloth for her turban. Her trousers are rolled up to the knee, for she has been working, and they are looped again, or tied up, in a manner that is all the inner Orient, all its hidden life, expressed. She has the clear, bell like voice of the negress, and that pathos which makes it hard to understand how they have ever been ill treated. Her wrists and ankles have heavy silver bangles. If not most grave and sad, she is laughing with animal, white teeth. This is the first negress, but there are many more, and we comprehend why the Moors find them more amusing and more companionable than their own women. With no education, they are not so ignorant. They have more vitality and higher spirits, though easily dejected and, like pet animals, taking their mood from their masters. They are indeed, just animals; but, in the same breath, are more human than the Moors. It is their temperament, which is that of a child, while they are not cruel and ruthless.

The black Sultanas have come up from the South to luxury and indolence. To them it is a paradise of silks and snows, while the red-gold orange bough is still a wonder. We should find among them many graces and subtleties that are new, or unknown, and of which the poetry is in the past and in the future. That is to say, such dark beauties in old Morocco, or, indeed, in all the lands of Islam, would have made subjects for our greatest painters, could they but have seen them. And, in the distant future, West Africa,

## *The Black Sultanas*

where lies the negro promise for the whole of their dark continent, may have its sculptors, its poets and musicians, when, once more, their unfamiliar beauty may enchant a world. But, here, it moves before our eyes. It must be confined, interior, deeply claustral, like a sight of the nuns in their clausura.

What beauty in a smooth black wrist holding but a cup of water! The long thin fingers, the delicate jointing of the arm and hand, though the palm of the hand is ever simian, it is true. The whites of the eyes, too, are like the blackamoor's of pantomime, as if the face had been blacked and would rub off with a sponge. There are negresses like that, and with the clumsy movements of that stage convention, mere slaves of the plantation, but this is of the black men who are aristocrats or kings. Such negresses are always tall and thin. Their ancestry is of the shepherd or the warrior. They have small heads and long thin necks. Their backs are straight, and their figures, not of the Praxitelean canon, but in a mould and proportion that belong to another world, another hue of nudity, not the Pentelic or the Parian marble with their lights of snow or honey. Like a column of smoke, and the nymph or goddess moving in that pillar, is the discovery of their bodies, for it is a different creation. It is thin and clear as smoke, and its line is of a smoke stem, with straight edges curving and bending in the shadeless evening. Their hair need not be the lamb's back with its short, close curls. It can be combed into tight ridges, or plaited like Pharaoh's wife. It can be formal like a dancer's wig, when they wear blonde wigs, but this is dark as a raven's wing and glossy as jet. The chocolate or eggshell smoothness of their cheeks descends, with no difference, into their necks and shoulders. Their greatest beauty is in their backs, which are valleyed or channelled by the backbone between the twin shoulder blades, that could in their movements be a pair of flightless wings, down to the thinness of their maiden waists, then swelling, below that, like the statue of Venus Callipyge. One negress can wear a net or snood of silver on her hair. Another, with feather headdress, can be the Indian slave, or attendant, in a tapestry. There can be coral necklaces and, at wrists and shoulders, ambergris from coasts where the whale spouts and where he casts ashore, in dead and empty Mauretania. A negress holds a golden orange in her hand. Others, with bouquets or wands of jasmine at their ears, or held

## *Hybrids of the Isles*

in the fingers to the ebon face like a toy of ivory, or scented pomander, ensnare our fancy. They can wear sandals, or gilded cothurnes with the thongs criss-crossing on their sable calves, like black huntresses who will bring home lion cubs; or, barefoot and henna'd, be the black slaves of the harem. Look again at the slender and thin wrists! Their movements are as a language that we cannot understand. But open their hands and they will have simian palms. They are but animals. This is their beauty and their pathos. It is animal or sensual pleasure, and a feasting of the eyes. Here is nothing for the mind. It is only for the senses. But music, poetry, painting, dwell here. Who would impute more things than this to the movements of a sable wrist and hand?

But the Fonduk sleeps, at last, behind its heavy wooden doors. And soon, too soon, we would know the smell of dawn, a cold or wetness, like rain upon the dust, and a freshening of the sky. It is another white-hot day. Now, it is young, but in an hour will lie heavy upon the sleepers. Long ago the white ibis has winged away to hills and plains of marigold, and the stork stands sentinel upon her nest. The snowy mountains float like clouds upon the air. Soon, it will be the hot Africa, and one more long and timeless noon.

We must leave this for its hybrids, in the Western ocean, the crosses or interminglings of the West Indies. They have come out from the hold of the slave ship and been sent to work upon the plantations. For two hundred years, and drop by drop, new blood came from the Gold Coast and Ivory Coast, from Guinea and Benin, but its siftings or permutations took place among the sugarcanes. Those golden brakes or coverts gave more of shade and coolness than there is in Africa. They forgot their own language and spoke their master's tongue, English, French, or Dutch, but always with an accent, an intonation of their own, sometimes all mingled, like the mongrel 'papiamento'. But, descending towards them, and darkening in colour were the Creoles, of French or Spanish origin, who never left their islands, and were untainted, but approached to the Indian, to the aborigine. Their temperament is Indian, and their voices are softened into languor and contentment. In the end it is more complicated still, for there are true Indians, Hindus, Chinese, Scotch and Irish, Poles and Jews, it would be impossible, or nearly so, to tell

## *Antillaises*

the ancestors of any Creole. But, always, there is the dusky shade or shadow in them, part negress and part Indian, and a skin that is made for feathers, as with the Indians on old tapestries. It is the breath of the islands on their bodies, blown, in indifference, from the four quarters of the winds, but ever soft and languorous, round the mulky headlands. Their bays are for the frigate or the galleon, landlocked harbours overhung with flowers, isles that float on ocean, or are green flanks of mountains come up out of the tides to taste this Western air. For this is not the Orient, nor Africa. It has its own character, and a soil in which these hybrids thrive.

The Antillaises wear a cotton handkerchief or bandana, which is not a turban, and so, in Martinique or Guadeloupe, the Creoles, with their patois of old French, and their printed cotton dresses, move in a world of imagery that is the bright hybrid of the four winds and four continents. This folded handkerchief has two ears or horns, which are no more than the loose ends of the knot with which it is tied, but they give to the head and to the whole person an air which is different. It is no longer the crocus or the tulip turban, but the horned pheasant, a crested head, an egret, or a golden crane, a beauty which is in extension or exaggeration upon itself. Dilution of their blood, in the lightening or darkening of their pigment, is the cause of this, and, as in all hybrids, the climate and scene are in contingency upon it. A new type has been evolved which is natural to its surroundings. And, being a hybrid, it is in many different hues, but the same in form, and with this signature upon them. It is born of the winds and waters, and is sister to the flowers and to the exotic blossoms on the branches. In synonym, it is light coffee, or the milk of cocoa, not whipped to a froth and sipped up through a reed, as the feathered Aztecs drank it; nor the soconusco, burnt brown with cinnamon, and only drunk by grandees of the court of Spain; but this is pale like milk, like moonlight, like the magnolia petal, and, like the mule pink, shows its crosses, being fair or pale against the negress, but, in contrast, is the Creole, languid, soft voiced, the ivory or the almond, if the lights are of the golden North.

There are the other islands, to windward and leeward, lying in a chain. Their sound is of the galleons. They are Dutch or Spanish, though the Spaniard is long gone. Or they come from

### *Isles to Windward or Leeward*

the Stuart age, made over to the planters. Antigua, Tobago, Curaçao, Trinidad; and, while we listen to their syllables, Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada, Demerara, like the saps of their sugar canes; the black Barbados, heavy and auriferous like a wetted river sand, the lighter Demerara, from the mainland of Surinam, more blonde and sparkling, with less of the molasses; we think of those many isles and many races, the white, the black, the olive:

*The Samboe dark, and the Mulatto brown,  
The Maesti fair, the well-limb'd Quaderoon,*

the Quaderoon, or Quadroon, being the offspring of a White and a Mulatto; the Samboe between a Mulatto and a Negro, and a Maesti the child of an European and a Quadroon. In the time of the planters in Dutch Guiana, or Surinam: 'This was the figure and dress of a Quaderoon girl, as they usually appear in this colony. They are mostly tall, straight, and gracefully formed, rather more slender than the Mulattoes, and never go naked above the waist like the former. Their dress commonly consists of a satin petticoat, covered with flowered gauze; a close short jacket, made of best India chintz or silk, laced before, and shewing about an handbreath of a fine muslin shift between the jacket and the petticoat. As for stockings and shoes, the slaves in this country never wear them. Their heads are adorned with a fine bunch of black hair in short natural ringlets; they wear a black or white beaver hat with a feather, or a gold loop and button, their neck, arms, and ancles are ornamented with chains, bracelets, and gold medals.' The Mulattoes, according to the same authority, who was much devoted to one, in particular, fifteen years old and called Joanna, had: 'hair of a dark brown inclining to black, forming a beautiful globe of small ringlets, ornamented with flowers and gold spangles. Round her neck, her arms, and her ancles, she wore gold chains, rings, and medals; while a shawl of India muslin, the end of which was negligently thrown over her polished shoulders, gracefully covered part of her lovely bosom, a petticoat of rich chintz alone completed her apparel. Bareheaded and barefooted, she shone with double lustre, as she carried in her delicate hand a beaver hat, the crown trimmed round with silver.' At this point, in the book from which we are quoting, we are given the portrait of Joanna, with her necklace and earrings and her hatband em-

## *Portrait of Joanna*

bossed in gold. But the author continues: 'The figure and appearance of this charming creature could not but attract my particular attention, as they did indeed that of all who beheld her; and induced me to enquire from Mrs. Demelly, with much surprise, who she was, that appeared to be so much distinguished above all others of her species, in the colony.

' "She is, Sir," replied this lady, "the daughter of a respectable gentleman, named Kruythoff; who had, besides this girl, four children by a black woman, called Cery, the property of a Mr. D. B. on his estate called Fauconberg, in the upper part of the river Comewina. Some few years since Mr. Kruythoff made the offer of about one thousand pounds sterling to Mr. D. B. to obtain manumission for his offspring, which being inhumanly refused, it had such an effect on his spirits, that he became frantic, and died in that melancholy state soon after; leaving in slavery, at the discretion of a tyrant, two boys and three fine girls, of which the one now before us is the eldest. The gold medals etc. which seem to surprise you, are the gifts which her faithful mother, who is a most deserving woman towards her children, and of some consequence amongst her caste, received from her father (whom she ever attended with exemplary affection) just before he expired..." Having thanked Mrs. Demelly for her account of Joanna, in whose eye glittered the precious pearl of sympathy, I took my leave, and went to my lodging in a state of sadness and stupefaction.'

In the end, he was married to Joanna: 'A decent wedding, at which many of our respectable friends made their appearance, etc., etc. From that instant this excellent creature was mine. I cannot omit to record, that having purchased for her presents to the value of twenty guineas, I was the next day greatly astonished to see all my gold returned upon my table; the charming Joanna having carried every article back to the merchants, who cheerfully returned her the money. Your generous intentions alone, Sir, (she said) were sufficient: but allow me to tell you that I cannot help considering any superfluous expense on my account as a diminution of that good opinion which I hope you have, and will ever entertain, of my disinterested disposition.'

After the enjoyment of a prolonged period of happiness, the end of this story reads sadly, even in the stilted language of the



## Portrait of Joanna

day. 'I must now draw this narrative to a conclusion, by once more mentioning the name of Joanna, and acquaint the reader, that, alas!—Joanna is no more!!!—In the month of August, 1783, I received the melancholy tidings, which pierced me to the soul, that on the fatal fifth of November this virtuous young woman departed this life, as some suspected by poison, administered by the hand of jealousy and envy, on account of her prosperity, and the marks of distinction which her superior merit had so justly attracted from the respectable part of the colony. But she is no more! Reader!—the virtuous Joanna, who so often saved my life, is no more!!!—Her adopted mother, Mrs. Godefroy, who bedewed her beauteous body with tears, ordered it to be interred with every mark of respect, under the grove of orangetrees where she had lived. Her lovely boy was sent to me, with a bill of near two hundred pounds, his private property, by inheritance from his mother—soon after which expired both his very faithful guardians.\*'

\* The work from which we have quoted is *Narrative of a five years' expedition against the revolted negroes of Surinam* by Captain J. G. Stedman, London, 1796. This book is curious because of its engravings by William Blake. Our copy is not only one of the first edition but is, also, one of the very few issued on large and fine paper with the plates coloured by hand. Nearly all the figure subjects, and many of the natural history subjects, are engraved by William Blake, who will, presumably, have given his instructions for the colouring. The book is marred by the appalling cruelties quoted in it, inflicted by the planters upon the negro slaves. Some of the stories are truly horrific in their import. He witnessed, for example, the following incident, which we abbreviate. It took place at the capital, Paramaribo. 'Early the next morning, while musing on all the different dangers and chastisements to which the lower class of people are exposed, I heard a crowd pass under my window. Curiosity made me start up, dress in a hurry, and follow them. When I discovered three negroes in chains, surrounded by a guard, going to be executed in the savannah. . . . The third negro, whose name was Neptune, was no slave, but his own master, and a carpenter by trade. He was young and handsome. This man, having stolen a sheep, to entertain a favourite young woman, the overseer, who burnt with jealousy, had determined to see him hanged, to prevent which, Neptune shot him dead among the sugarcanes, for these offences he was sentenced to be broken alive upon the rack without the benefit of the coup-de-grace or mercy stroke. Informed of the dreadful sentence, he composedly laid himself down on his back on a strong cross on which, with arms and legs expanded, he was fastened by ropes. The executioner, also a black man, having now with a hatchet chopped off his left hand, next took up a heavy iron bar with which, by repeated blows, he broke his bones to shivers, till the marrow, blood, and splinters flew about the field, but the prisoner never uttered a groan, nor a sigh. The ropes being next unlashd, I imagined him dead, and felt happy, till

## *Portrait of Joanna*

This author, we add in conclusion, would seem to have had a particular affection for the orangetree. 'On the 17th, however, my eyes were better feasted, when, going to dine with Colonel Texier, of the Society troops, I first took a walk in the orange grove and the Governor's gardens, here, peeping through the foliage, I soon discovered two most elegant female figures after bathing, the one a fine young Samboe, the other a blooming Quadroon, which last was so very fair complexioned, that she might have passed for a native of Greece, while the roses that glowed in her cheek were equal to those that blossomed in the shrubbery. Leaving them to enjoy their innocent amusement of bathing, I spent the remaining hour before dinner amongst the shady fruit trees, blooming bowers, and serpentine gravel walks, where indeed I saw greater variety of European plants than I imagined were produced in a tropical climate, such as mint, fennel, sage, rosemary, golden-rod and jassamine, the sensitive

the magistrates stirring to depart he writhed himself from the cross, when he fell on the grass, and damned them all as a set of barbarous rascals, at the same time removing his right hand and by the help of his teeth, he rested his head on part of the timber, and asked the bystanders for a pipe of tobacco, which was infamously answered by kicking and spitting on him, till I, with some American seamen, thought proper to prevent it. He then begged that his head might be chopped off, but to no purpose. After which he sang two extempore songs with a clear voice.

Next, observing the soldier that stood sentinel over him, biting occasionally on a piece of dry bread, he asked him "how it came to pass that he, a white man, should have no meat to eat along with it" "Because I am not so rich", answered the soldier. "Then I will make you a present, sir", said the negro, "first, pick my hand that was chopped off clean to the bones, next begin to devour my body, till you are glutted, when you will have both bread and meat as best becomes you", which piece of humour was followed by a second laugh, and thus he continued, until I left him, which was about three hours after the dreadful execution.

About three o'clock in that afternoon, walking towards the place of death, the first object I saw was his head at some distance, placed on a stake, nodding to me backwards and forwards, as if he had really been alive. I instantly stopped short, and seeing no person in the savannah, nor a breath of wind sufficient to move a leaf or a feather, I acknowledge that I was rivetted to the ground, where I stood without having the resolution of advancing one step for some time.

At last I boldly walked up, and instantly discovered the cause of the phenomenon, by the return of a vulture to the gallows, who perched upon the gallows, as if to dispute with me for this feast of carrion, which bird, having already picked out one of the eyes, had fled at my first approach, and striking the skull with his talons, as he took his sudden flight, occasioned the motion. I shall now only add that this poor wretch, after living near six hours, had been knocked on the head by the commiserating sentinel, the marks of whose musket were perfectly visible by a large open fracture in the skull.

### *The Planter, by William Blake*

plant, pomegranates, roses, figs, and even some grapes.' And he ends with an encomium of the avocado pear.

But we must not stay for ever upon the mainland of Surinam. There are all the islands. A number of paradises for the planter, but mostly places of misery for the slaves. We can see the former, in the engraving by William Blake, in his morning dress, in a pair of the finest Holland trousers, white silk stockings, and red or yellow Morocco slippers; the neck of his shirt open, and nothing over it, a loose flowing nightgown of the finest India chintz excepted. On his head is a cotton nightcap, as thin as a cobweb, and over that an enormous beaver hat. He smokes a long pipe, while a female Quadroon slave holds his glass of Madeira and water. This again, is the planter of Surinam, but his equivalent is in all the islands, to Jamaica and great Cuba. It is, however, not so much the planter as the flowers and hybrid races that attract us. The fascination of the Creole is that, perhaps nowhere else in the world is there the same beauty combined with softness and warm languor. They have become women of the Orient, living behind their shutters, shading the sun from their complexions, yet dwelling in the heart of heat, not able to bear the cold, but born for the verandah or the patio. It is the same through all the Creole world, from New Orleans to Trinidad. But who, then, is a Creole? Who, a Mestice? Mongroo; Mulatto, Quadroon; Octeroon? And it changes. It can never stay the same. No one, among so many hybrids, will be likely to find her balance, her exact equivalent in blood. Her children will be lighter or darker. Many would be the fluctuations, if we knew the true family tree; how, during three hundred years, they have become more like the Indians, or more Mulatto; then lighter and fairer and, in a generation, and without warning, grown darker than the Habaneras, shading to chocolate, to the nutshell milk.

There can be Creoles with Celtic names, and the prefix of the sept of Ireland, who have straight black Indian hair and grey or blue eyes, set slantwise in their heads. They are of the blood of the Empress Josephine, with French and, perhaps, Polish ancestry, but tinged with the Indian, the Carib, for it is the Caribbean, and with wrists and ankles of the Congo come down to her from long ago. Such a person must have many generations of beauty and mystery behind her. 'My parents lived by hunting and fishing: I



A PLANTER OF SURINAM  
*drawn and engraved by William Blake*



## Creole

was stolen from them very young, whilst playing on the sands with my two little brothers: I was put into a sack and carried for several miles. I afterwards became the slave of a King on the coast of Guinea, with several hundreds more. When our master died, the principal part of his slaves were beheaded and buried along with him, I, with some other children of my age, were bestowed as presents to the different captains of his army; and the master of a Dutch ship afterwards had me, in exchange for a musket and some gunpowder.' This led to the slave ship; but it is not our purpose, here, to dwell upon those fearful sufferings, or upon the misery of the plantations. There are seven shades of colour, not including the Indian or, now, the Hindoo, or Chinese. And, as well, so many European races. The Irish, in the particular instance we are speaking of, may have been settled in Barbados, or in Trinidad, since the transportations under the rule of Cromwell, when great numbers of rebels were sent overseas to work as slaves in the plantations. Their blood may have remained pure for several generations, only to receive sudden and unsuspected alteration from marriage with someone, as fair skinned as themselves, but with a hidden taint, a tincturing of the pigment which, we may feel positive, was the secret of their attraction. In the next generation it would be the double hybrid, until we arrive at some one with the blue eyes of the Celt, but wider and larger in their iris, tilted at the Slav angle close to the slanting cheekbones, set in a face which could be Indian or Bantu, and with a figure that is American of our own time. The Southern voice, which is soft and slow, has the charm and pathos of the savannah, as though born to speak English, though English is not natural to it. This it is which can give so indescribable a weight of sentiment when they talk of home, for home, to them, is many thousand miles away, not near to the shaddock and the pineapple, but in the mangrove swamp, upon the Swanee river. They dream of it, but they have never seen it. And now farewell! farewell to these islands where I have never been. This part of *Profane and Sacred Love*, which finishes, brings us to the nuns' choir and to their voices at the grille.

## *Droning of the Bees*

v

It is a morning in the South, early in the year. The almond is in blossom.

But there is not long to wait. In a moment or two the key has been found and we go into the church. It is long and high, with a Mudéjar ceiling, work which is, at once, the spider and the honeycomb. From its long, thin shape it is more a chapel than a church. The walls are lined with coloured tiles, or azulejos. And there are tombs and canopies and many altars. No one ever comes here. It was with difficulty that the key turned in the door. But listen! listen! What can be that droning? It is like the wings of bees, like the wild bees in the tomb of Agamemnon. There, they come in through a crevice, and their droning is in the dome of the tomb chamber, above where the golden masks lay in the dust of ages. Here, too, it is high up, near the ceiling, close to the *artesonado*. It keeps to the gilded honeycombs. But no need for more. It is the droning of the nuns.

Along the walls are tombs of knights who died in battle, princes and great men in their time. Thus praying, praying, is equivalent to the dusting of their effigies, though none know their names, or can read what is written there. It is one sort of immortality, an earthly one, a kind of paid flattery, but better than oblivion. Or is it better to be forgotten? Perhaps it is only if a young knight lies buried that there is truth and pathos in those tears and in the waving of those wings. For that is the sound. That is the music and its meaning. But listen! listen again and think upon it! The sound is droning, droning. These are the metamorphoses of insects, little beings whom we look upon with horror, but they are changed into court ladies, virgin princesses, priestesses, and nuns.

Their grille, or balcony, is at the far end, opposite the altar. But you cannot look at them. An iron lattice with golden flowers and roses goes up to the ceiling, though the thicket stops short of that, and there are but the empty panes or mullions. The droning, droning, is behind the grille and comes down, down, while they are spinning, for its sound is not of idleness, not the insects in a summer wood at evening, not a ~~droning~~ for pleasure but a honey-taking, yet something more slumbrous, more domestic, more

## *The Nun's Grille*

continual, and less of an adventure. It is something which is perpetual, and of which no appreciable part of the whole is ever finished, yet their nature urges them to it, so that it is measureless, like the dimension of time, itself, according to the different manners of its reckoning, only a substance or an entity if you think of it like that and, really, with no beginning and no end, just time, which you can either worship or ignore. If you listen for a little while longer, the droning comes to mean all things. It can be an interpretation of the heat of noon: it can mean nothing, nothing: or it loads the air with flowers and, another moment, is suffering and telling its monotony of wasted days. It is possible not to listen to it, and to look at the monuments, instead, but it will come back to you as though you had never heard the drone before. It is never, never, silent . . . and, then, it stops.

The death or passing of this murmuring leaves the vessel empty. It takes, in imagery, the heat out of the morning. But there is not a footstep, nor a movement. It is but an interval. And it begins again on a higher note, as though hurrying, and then becomes slow and slumbrous, older in tone, and but a telling of the beads, an old monotony, a murmuring or mumbling. It had, in the beginning, the ghost or the shadow of someone feminine and youthful, a higher tone and a speeding of the spinning wheel. But there are no Fates here. Nothing can happen. No future time, no present, nothing but the past. As for the living moment, it is no more than another morning. The hours go more slowly if you hurry through them. The dead are sleeping. And the young knight sleeps the deepest sleep of all, dreamless as when he was a little baby, long ago, and went from lap to lap. That was in the time of steeple hats and rat-tailed shoes.

But the droning, too, is like the sound of millwaters. They are binding the golden harvest, and the lovely cornfield is but stubble. As for the millwaters, they, too, are feminine. They churn and churn. It is a turning or spinning of distaff or of spindle, endless and inconsequent. But no: they are the insects in their metamorphoses, winged virgins who are droning in the hive, beating their wings, which they will never use in flight. It is the oldest of old sounds, so old that the dead turn in their sleep and go to dust in slumber. They are praying, or making incantation, over old dead bones. So where is the honey in this carved and



## *The Nun's Grille*

fretted hive? For, yet, there is something cloying and heavy in the air. If the nuns were dispossessed and the convent empty, you would still feel it and could listen for its murmuring. So take up the seashell and hold it to your ear! Listen in the summer wood! The leaves are never still. There is a murmuring and another, though a little, world is working. Stay still in the open field and hear the whirring of our world! This drone of wings is how they find their comfort: how they spin for another life and make ready their robe, which, first and foremost, is a winding sheet. They have to pass through dust. Like the insects, they must sleep through the long winter. It is against nature not to store up honey. Here, there is no certainty. Nothing but a promise made from mouth to mouth. How cruel to disturb them: to pull off their wings and bring them down to ground: to destroy their labours and their wasted days: to rob them of their honey!

It is a nasal droning, with the timbre of the voice of Spain. For this is a convent in Seville, one like many others, and it needs no name. Here is no imagery of the millwaters or the summer woods, for it is a convent in a noisy town; but that sad, but busy, droning brought those images before the mind. The nuns' choir, though invisible to ourselves, is a large room or boudoir from which they look down into the church. True, it cannot be comfortable, but it is more of a drawingroom than the bare rooms of the convent. It has benches and cushions and illuminated books. And they come into it as you come into a drawingroom, through one of many doors. Some are excused the droning if they have other work to do. Others are ever droning, in perpetual adoration. It is better not to be precise; not to know how many hours they pray. How quickly time must go, up there! Faster than in the street, in the world of living men and women; more swiftly than in the tomb; faster than with little children; quicker winged than the memories of old men and women remembering when they were alive; quicker than youth itself and leading, more certainly, to nothing. It would be no part of our philosophy to make excuses for them. Their lives are wasted, spent to no purpose, but no worse for that than any other lives. The trajectory is in slow motion, but, if we quicken it, we get the picture we would wish to paint. For the sadness, the sad burden is in all those empty hours. It is their very purpose, their prayers, which are the waste-

## *The Nun's Grille*

fulness. Who am I, though, that I should say this? For I have never prayed, and do not believe in prayer. Unless, at least, it be a means to determine wishes and ambitions, and by concentration of purpose to achieve them. We could admire a musical instrument, and not appreciate its tone, not like its resonance, or the volume of its sound. In just that manner a sceptic can understand their prayers. To such a mind it is too much prayer that spoils the beauty of the convent.

What, then, could bind together these communities and keep them from the world? Is it not enough, in itself, to live in a walled garden, for the Hortus Conclusus could hold all the flowers of the spirit as well as all the flowers of the world? Separation from the world of men and women gives time to till that soil. But such flowers of the spirit are far removed from superstition. They belong to enlightenment, to a time while the light strengthens, not to nights of ignorance and darkness. But such a community could never fill its numbers. Such souls are too rare, and they have no increase. They live but once and the continuity is broken. It cannot always be creation, the giving birth to intellect and imagination. There must be routine, the accomplishment of daily tasks and duties, years when creation slumbers and the ordinary and average have their day. The philosophy, therefore, and the beauty of this virgin life, in all of it which expresses that Sacred or Divine Love is their calling, will form our subject. Their prayers are part of the picture, but not the reason that prompted us to paint it. We would have them, for our own aesthetic pleasure, at every other duty than that for which they are assembled and enclosed. From a third to a half of their energies may be increased by this, while their resolution would not be weakened by the same worship in another form. Divine or Sacred Love means other things than meditation and a mumbling of prayers. If it were music that would be a different matter; though music, even, is but a part of it. There are so many other instruments of worship. For the cloister is more than a refuge from the world; there is opportunity in this predicament. They have come together for a purpose, not merely for escape. Our project is to intensify, or dramatize, this visual scene, making use of the evidence that has come before our eyes and completing the picture by surmise and from imagination. Of a certainty, such lives are, and have been, possible. That,

## *The Nun's Grille*

to their possibility, so many daily hours of solitude and uselessness have been added, is but the proof of what could be achieved in the full practice of these hooded or these hidden energies.

They are but a half—or not so much—fulfilled. And, as with so many other lives, it is their own ends which have defeated them. This, however, is the drama. Their hardships and austerities make the dark colours of the scene, and it is not defeat if they achieve the purpose of their lives. We know, too well, that the earthly paradise we would design for them is impossible. But its occasional perfections are like the divine melodies of music. They break suddenly, and come back again. There is no reason for them. The inspired moment is after hours of working. We, the audience, no less than the artist, have to wait upon it. We must take the waiting with the rush of speed. And to no subject could this truth be applied with a more accurate meaning than in this fantasy to which we now begin to give our energies. We treat of the nuns in their needlework and embroidery, in the dispensary and pharmacy, in their singing and among the flowers of the garden, behind the grille and in the parlatorio. Such activities, as neither men nor women can be all philosophers or poets, form the painted scenery for these virgin lives. Who would not rather see them at these pastimes, against the fanciful architecture of all ages and every clime, than in the stone cell and on their knees? That, too, penitence and preparation are in the picture, but the twist or foreshortening by which we study them and draw the composition will alter that proportion and give us their lives as swift, or swifter, than they really pass, ignoring the monotony

But we must begin with places. Let us go somewhere far away, that it may be a solitude through unfamiliarity. But, also, we must prove our liberty of choice and movement. The beautiful, in this, inasmuch as it appeals to the imagination, does not lie in what is near to hand. It is a thing of occasion, the play of locality and environment. And the shadows whom we project, when these scenes are ended, will be stronger and more individual from this contrast with the lives spent in these cages. For they are not prisons, though, perhaps, to be confined of your own free-will, or because it is the convention, is more hard than to suffer for your crimes. It is no martyrdom, when all your companions are happy and have found their solace. But we have to consider that it would

## *The Nun's Grille*

be the rare soul who would feel more than a few regrets. We are not searching, here, for exceptional human beings. These souls, and their persons, have an animal similarity. They are sheep of a flock, the whole company of doves, swan princesses, or whatever simile you choose to call them by. We must impute to them not the individual, but the group, soul or consciousness. This, indeed, must be the ideal of any community who give their fortune and liberty into the common fund. They are to become alike in mind and plumage, regimented to the pious plan. Even so, that amount of their days not spent in prayer is as much, in total, as the lives and recreations of the working classes, who spend a third of their lives in shop or factory, and the rest in the train or 'bus, at home, or sleeping.

But we return to the doves of the cloister. It will be in remote places, far removed from what we conceive to be modernity, that we shall find our instances. For distance, like time, is comparative and not absolute. If it is your home, and what you are accustomed to, it is never distant, unless you are far away from it, and then, the measure is different, it is you who are remote, wherever you may be. The population may be ignorant and superstitious, but so it must be in order to support and countenance this waste. These are the vestal virgins, and it goes back to the earliest history of men that they should be honoured and set to live apart. Perhaps this sacrifice or abnegation of what was most beautiful and valuable in human beings was the beginning of all human strength, other than brute force. In this sense it was among the greatest of human inventions, a prophecy of peace amid incessant fighting. Long, long ago, it will have lost that meaning. But this most unproductive and expensive of legends has continued. It is human sacrifice with no shedding of blood. And it had its own secret of perpetuation. The invention spread and multiplied, being so universal in all races who are not mere savages that it is not only of Christian connotation, but is found in most other religions. But it would be, obviously, a superstitious and a fickle population who most admired this sacrifice and made its embellishment into a festival. Such is the soil in which these institutions thrived. There are so many instances, and the choice among them takes us to cloisters that we would argue were both paradise and prison for their inmates.

## *The Convent of Jesus at Aveiro*

Our first instance is Aveiro. This is a little town in Portugal, on the salt lagoons to the south of Oporto and not far, in modern distance, from the fishermen of Nazaret. It is the same water world, with those curious boats that we have mentioned; 'esguichos', shaped like a sickle or a crescent moon riding on the waters; 'moliceiros', with poops and prows like necks of swans, both carrying loads of salt or seaweed on the salt lagoons, and all brightly painted with most brilliant colours. The great Atlantic is but a mile or two away beyond the dunes. But the interest of Aveiro is in its convent of Jesus, or Santa Joana, called after the daughter of Alphonso V of Portugal, who was a nun here in the fifteenth century. The chapel, of which the decoration dates from two centuries later, is well described as 'rutilante de dorures'. That is the phrase applied to it in the French guide book, and the term is true. Nowhere else than in Portugal and, there, in few places, perhaps four or five in all, Lisbon not included, for the earthquake destroyed everything, is there this richness of pure gilding. It is the gold of Brazil, of Mines Gerães, in real gold leaf upon the carving, a soft, crumbling sand of gold, which glitters without light upon it. The carved ceiling is wonderful in this respect, and so is the altar, the carvings of which are coffered and recessed on purpose to dazzle and bewilder the eyes. It is a golden tabernacle lifted up and held sacred in these wings of gold. The chapel, thus, is not remarkable as architecture but it is incredible in gilding. Such an effect is nowhere else to be seen, save where we shall mention it, and, always, it is the gold of South America come over in the galleon.

Now the nuns, in Portugal, have been long dispossessed. They were abolished after the expulsion of Dom Miguel (the equivalent, in Portugal, to Don Carlos) by the laws of 1834. Most of them rejoined the world, since no more neophytes were allowed to take the veil, while the sequestration of their property had reduced them all to poverty. A few nuns chose to remain, and there are harrowing stories of the appalling state of infirmity and starvation in which a few old nuns were living, as late as the 'seventies of last century, in a convent in mid-Portugal, near Vizeu. They were the last of the Portuguese nuns.

Here, at Aveiro, it is as though the doors of the convent had been sealed up in 1770. Yet the dust of two hundred years is no-

### *The Convent of Jesus at Aveiro*

where to be seen. We could think that, as in children's stories, or the libretto of a ballet, the nuns come back to it. But not at night. This is not the Romantic movement. These are not the moonlit wraiths of *Giselle*, nor *Robert le Diable* with its *valse infernale* and its ballet of nuns. This belongs to another, and a sunlit, age. If they come back, at all, it would be morning or evening, or in the shuttered noon. The convent and its cloisters have been made into a regional museum. But no one visits it. Down in one corner live a peasant family. The balconies are hung with flowers and birdcages dangle from the beams. They are the peasants or *contadini* of the piece, actually, of course, it is the custodian who lives there. For the rooms above, besides some early paintings, have a collection which, even to an eye that has feasted long upon the rococo, in all countries, has an exceptional or transcendental charm. It is the art of the 'presepio', the figurine, akin to that of Southern Italy or Bavaria, essentially a feminine art, and work, probably, of the nuns, themselves. There are dressed figures, little shrines, and painted papers. But the arrangement and handling are so exquisite that we must come to think of Aveiro as a little centre, to itself, in which there was leisure and happiness to make such things, and hands that could not be improved upon for graceful invention. The intrinsic prettiness is astonishing in scope and quantity, an art of confectionery, but ravishing in taste and tact. Painted paper, or a wooden panel, as background to a little shrine, will have a design of flowers on it that can only have been conceived of in a world in which the rhythm brought continual delights. The colours, too, are fresh as spring, or as morning or evening in their world of rococo, light pinks and blues and greens, of which those bare names give but the indication. Silks and materials are a delight and ravishment in colours and in embroidery. But it is particularly the dressing and arrangement, art of the milliner, or even of the window dresser, the angle, the neatness, the alluring colour. Not, indeed, more important than cut paper, but the heaviest books are only paper. To deny this charm would be to say that painted scenery is never beautiful. Its instruments are scissors, needles, paint brushes. But, in effect, this is the world of perfectionment in little things.

This remote part of Portugal, a remote country, with the Atlantic to one side, two days' journey from Oporto, lost in the

## *Workshop of the Nuns*

dunes and salt lagoons, how comes it that this lonely district has an art as delicate as that of Venice? It is far, too, from Braga, which was the capital of its baroque school of architecture. Quite different, also, for the buildings of Braga are whitewashed walls and sober granite, a grey green granite of which there are no quarries near Aveiro. Perhaps, in the garden staircases of Bom Jesus or Lamego, works without parallel in other lands, we would find the masculine counterpart to the minor arts of Aveiro. For they are feminine. We must believe that it was the nuns, themselves, who possessed this touch of hand and could teach the people. Two nuns, or three, out of a hundred, not the whole of them. But with a master hand who invented, who brought this flower to blossom and who set its seed. And, in the embroidery and dressing, many other hands could play a part, not only of nuns, but children. So that it was a big workshop. It was like the preparations for a fancy dress ball, but a ball for children, as though their confirming or their first communion was a festival, an orgy of doll dressing, tableaux of innocence and fresh gaiety, rosy cheeked angels with black eyes of Portugal. In the slanting sunbeams those black eyed Cupids ascend, or descend from, Heaven on the golden ladders. Their wings are plumes of Cherubim, feathers dyed and painted in the workshop of the nuns. Or their wings are gauze and muslin and, like the little Indian of the rope trick, they climb up but a little way, and credulity will hide them.

Little plays and sacred dramas were given by the children. And, if we are to be present at these in the spirit in which they were performed, an earth, and a Heaven, and a Hell, must open for us. Children were the dolls or marionettes. But their literature of religious mysticism, the hyperbole and ecstasy in the lives of the Saints, as read by the nuns—or, indeed, the religious reading of Portugal in the time of João V and his successors—was as rich in symbolic incident as any painted ceiling. We must realize that there were definite text books of emblems and symbols, so that personification was easy and the similes, as they could be called, were understood. The figures in fresco paintings, among the Southern Catholics, all had their point and meaning, and were, generally, passed by experts before the painting was begun. Thus, the whole world of imagery was universal and had become the



PAINTED CARVINGS OF AVEIRO





### *Dressing a Skeleton*

vernacular. Dramas and Passion plays were, almost, a Jesuit invention, where, for instance, in the Roman churches enormous spectacles were staged under the direction of members of the great Galli Bibiena family. Lower down in the monastic scale, with the Capuchins, there was a pre-occupation with death in its primitive symbol of the skeleton. The Cappuccini, in some instances, had waxwork figures in the vaults below their churches; but, more often, their play was with mummied bodies, as in their monastery near Palermo, where the three or four thousand dead bodies are dirty and horrid, but not frightening, except to those persons who would be afraid of moths or bats. Another of their fantasies was in the arranging of old bones; skulls and tibia, or thigh bones, all forming patterns, as with the shells or pebbles in a garden grotto.

This morbid drama had its feminine parallel acted, chiefly, by the companies of nuns. It was the dressing and decking out of the skeletons of martyrs. They have been measured and fitted with court dresses of the costliest materials, spangled suits of Spanish cut, sequinned with jewels, with rings upon their bony fingers, and glittering tiaras posed upon their skulls. They lean upon one elbow on a cushioned deathbed, or stand, propped upon their feet, held up by hidden rods and fetters. A special ingenuity, as though it were the work of certain hands, shows its invention in the artificial flowers. There are wreaths and nosegays, chaplets and fallen blossoms, strewn for the festival as though from maiden fingers.

Sinister and pathetic scenes will have been enacted in the robing room, when the skeleton had to rest upon a chair, or had to kneel before it quite stood up. The articulation of this thin and hollow dummy would be always at fault in its machinery. It will have been difficult to fit his arm into its padded sleeve, or near to impossible to drag the martyr's skirt over her skull and past her bony shoulders. Now and again, the marionettes would move or nod their heads, but it was too natural to count as a miracle. We may think that it took days, or even weeks, to dress them for eternity, to remember the last detail before it was too late, and to fix their glass cages. Such doll or death's head dressing is part, certainly, of a talent for the theatre, while it has, as well, its morbid poetry. In Sicily and Naples such skeletons can be seen; in Bavaria and the Tyrol; and in Portugal and Spain. Nearly, if not always, they will have been the work of nuns. If they could inspire

### *Dressing a Skeleton*

a particular poetry, and we would think of Baudelaire, more especially, it is obvious, too, that a most curious book might be devoted to them. There have even been draughtsmen, or lesser artists, who have given their lives to such a task. For this martyrology would need a lifetime before it was completed, if set down in all its morbid detail with its necrophilic sadnesses and beauties.

Of such morbid obsessions there is no evidence at Aveiro. Instead, there are intoxicating prettiness and gaiety, qualities that are quite gone from us in our contemporary world. The apple greens, but of many kinds of apples, a pomology, in fact; the sugar pinks; the catalogue of blues, such are the bergère or bucolic graces. And, if we go into their workshops, we would find incessant preparation and a life as full with ceremonies and festivals as upon any isle of Bali. In some sense, indeed, but for the dancing, there are distinct parallels in the world of fantasy and legend with which they were surrounded, as in the temporary nature, the paper and plaster of their decorations, objects which would be destroyed to-morrow, for their criterion was newness. The quality of permanence is, after all, not essential to a work of art. There must be lighter things which are only good because new. Such is the particular enchantment of Aveiro, little objects, as though of yesterday, that will be gone to-morrow.

Yesterday and to-morrow, but how distant! It is all lost to us, just beyond reach, but not touching on to-day. There is, in all certainty, another night to live through before the slanting beams of morning. That belonged to the morning or evening of another world, the evening, in fact, and just before the sunset. Such are the bright, clear colours, which are in exaggeration, for the mid-day world is not like this. They lived, not in an afterglow, but just before the colour died, in a moment of hyperbole, of exaggerated stillness, when no one moved, and all eyes watched the sunset. Perhaps the light stayed later here than in some other places, here on the edge of ocean, where the long beams lie upon the water. There is an unreal emphasis, as of a wonderful, an exceptional moment. We are watching a sky spectacle which can never be repeated, a feeling everyone will know, with its expectancy that something may happen. But, indeed, it is to our own purpose to exaggerate this moment. The opportunity is our plaything.

## *The Romaria*

For the whole regiment of nuns has come out for an airing. They have a collation, a Romaria, once or twice a year. Early in the morning, before it was light, you would have heard, far off, a creaking and complaining that never stopped, like something slow and trundling, moving towards you, but so slow and in such seeming agony, yet ever nearer, but never near enough to see. It was a grinding, groaning, screeching, the turning of a whetstone, a filing or sharpening, but so clumsy, so patient, so long suffering and complaining, so laborious and plodding. If you were the writer, you would have heard in memory the little piping note call of the knife-grinder, his Papageno music in the early morning, for this is how you hear him in the streets of Seville. But this has not that bird soul. It is heavy footed, dewlapped, moving under the yoke with bowed head and in hopeless servitude. They are the peasants' ox-carts, belonging to the convent, with wheels of solid wood, the section of a tree trunk, more square than rounded, moving in slow agony and screeching on their axles. They have come for the infirm and aged of the nuns; and the peasants, who have no note of time, are waiting before daylight at the convent gate. None but countrymen could bear the screeching of those wheels

Already, like white doves, the nuns move in the shadowy cloisters. The portress is in her lodge. Presently, great panniers are carried down and laden on the donkeys. The dove throated morning has begun. Mules are brought to the door, and the Abbess and her court ladies mount their steeds. They start off for the pinewoods with a great crowd following. There are nuns on foot, and all move slowly, for it is not far away. It is the feast day, or Romaria, and little children walk in the procession, covered with gold, and wearing cardboard wings dressed out in silks and gauzes. Behind them go their mothers, and men who play bagpipes and accordeons, or beat incessantly, the drums, called zabumbas.

The place of meeting is on a little mound or eminence. Tables on trestles are laid beneath the trees. As the procession comes past, any children by the wayside, kneel down with joined hands, as if praying. It is the servants of the convent who have prepared the feast, women in peasant dresses with round, flat hats of black, of Lusitanian model, and a flap or veil at the back, descending to

## *Specialities of Portugal*

their shoulders. There are fish from the Atlantic, sardines taken by the fishermen of Nazaret, and the eternal codfish, bacalhau, of all Portugal. Great piles of bread and pastry load the trestles; but, more especially, there are the little cakes and sweets that no other country has in such plenty, each town or district having its speciality. Many, if not most of these, had we time to study the history of Portugal in the eighteenth century, were the invention and manufacture of the nuns. They are, in particular, the doces de ovos, sweets made with eggs: the ovos moles, especial to Aveiro, and packed in little wooden barrels: toucinho do céu, trouxas and lampreias de ovos from Portalegre and Caldas da Rainha; fios de ovos, aletria from Abrantes: doces de amêndoa, doce podre of Evora, morgado and dom rodrigo of Algarve: tujelinhas of Santo Tirso: pastéis de nata, sweet cakes of Tentugal: pães de ló, ginger-breads of Fafe, Ovar, Figueiro, Alfeizerão cavacas of Caldas, Felgueras, Resende: the morcela of Arouca: marzipan of Portalegre: arrufadas of Coimbra: fig or almond cakes of Freixo de Espada or Moncorvo: and how many more! For this, remember, is a feminine feast. It is not the banquet of Batalha or Alcobaça, as we might read of that in Beckford. This is a sweet tooth feasting, and they drink, not wine, but chocolate. Or draughts of lime or orange, orgeat or pomegranate with pounded barley. And sweet ices in great plenty.

But it is the sight, more than the feasting, that is peculiar and strange. For who has seen a fête champêtre, but only of white nuns? They are like doves or seagulls descended on the land. And there must be a reason for it. A glut of beech nuts, or an Atlantic storm. It is the same spot that they come to every summer, their open air refectory. To their midday meal, and they will have another in the evening, the lyric or idyllic noon succeeds. There is no siesta. No nun could sleep on such a day as this. They sit at the pinetree's foot, on the scented needles, touching the hot sand with their fingers. A warm breath, hot with resin, glaucous, dropping with the perfumed sap or gum, plays in the sighing, but now silent, boughs. It is as scented as the East, more warmly perfumed, more ambrosial, because the whole pinewood is a sleeping animal. The pine needles are its coat, its slumbrous fur, and then suddenly, in the midday stillness, it breathes out health and life. It sighs, in drops or tears of perfume, as though its breath were

## *Pine Wood*

dew that refreshes, that is an awakening, that lies soft upon the lips and eyelids, and is summer, but keeps cool, cool, in the pinewood.

All of the nuns are talking. Many of them, in twos or threes, go to and fro slowly, in among the stems. And, to some, it is a treat, an adventure, to walk far away. They can go to the edge of the wood and look out on the world. It is a shoal of sand banks, with the salt lagoons and, if you listen for it, and at some moments more than others, the great Atlantic breaking on the shore, a coast with no cliffs so that its roar is even and monotonous with every wave that comes. Here and now, it is wave upon wave, and, then, there is silence, as though something bigger is preparing and would break upon the sands.

But the composition of this lyric scene draws us back to the little mound and to the body of the nuns. For it composes into a scene or drama with a hundred figures. The white doves have taken possession of the landscape. Their white habits and black cowls, which are in simplification of the colour, enhance the drawing. It has the magpie markings, but is more simple because the blacks and whites are even and regular. They have no pattern, no pieing as of wings and tails, and are but black for head and white for body. All the interest is in the grouping and the movement, made more dramatic because all their habits are the same. And the total experience of their blacks and whites is, in itself, the key or secret of this pleasure, which is our delight in all chequered things, in the chessboard, in all parti-coloured flowers or dresses, but more exciting in pattern when it is but black and white. Their gestures and actions populate the scene. It is a picture of movement because all the colours are the same. Their habits or liveries are identical in marking, so that it is a theme in variation, and strength and subtlety come forth from the monotony.

The groups are ever changing. It is a banquet, a festival, such a scene as the worship of the golden calf, where all the nuns are priestesses or sacred virgins. The full cornucopia would be its emblem, for there is such plenty on the trestles and in baskets on the ground. Yet it is not the harvest, nor a feast of increase, for these are neuter beings, they have no progeny. So the celebration is by proxy, yet such is its purpose, or its hidden meaning. And a curious emphasis, a distortion, underlines the action, made more

## *The Verbena*

obvious in the lengthening shadows and by the light of sunset. It is still more manifest when four nuns between them lift the huge panniers and unpack the viands. There are nuns, pair by pair, to each handle of an amphora. Others are carrying cloths, or great sheets, by their four corners, as it might be fishermen furling down the sails. Some walk to and fro again, their heads bowed from custom, as though they are at prayer, while they talk and chatter like a lot of children. Others hobble, like witches, on their sticks; or lean on a companion and are led by her. There are the tall and gaunt, as if their lives of sacrifice had gone into their stature, stout nuns, the Merry Wives, mere hollow shells of laughter, for their lives have cheated them; and the odd or eccentric, who are told by the folds of their robes, or by the knotting of their girdles. What are the young nuns dreaming of? For they walk together, except where one is known attendant on an older nun. But we must think that here, not in a Venetian convent, nor among the sophistications of the world, there was little unhappiness, or frustration. Of so many sisters in any family, one or two would go into a convent. It was happier than marrying, if you did not want to marry, and, in their conditions they hardly knew their suitors. It was little more than an imaginary longing, a spiritual, and not a physical state, to which the cloister was equivalent. The mysticism of their faith comforted them with its simple metaphors, its legends of love and goodness, and the simplicities of its code of sin. The nuns had no children; but they knew the pleasures and affections of this sort, being surrounded, as though of purpose, by children in their lives; children to rear and educate, to have for companions, to prepare for the world they had, themselves, abandoned.

But, now, the Verbena\* or the feast begins. It is easy to know the Abbess by her place in the centre and by her pectoral cross. There is a long table, and two great wings of trestles to either hand; but our theme is the effect and not the details of this banquet. For the beams of light are nearly level. They are golden searchlights played into the pinewood, but swinging slow and, where they have lifted, it will be dead until to-morrow morning. It is a feast of druidesses, but not their native oaktrees, for this is resinous and aromatic. A person in ignorance would wonder at

\* Verbena is the Portuguese term for a picnic.

## *The Abbess of the Ultimate Shade*

the gathering. Why have they come here? For what reason are they at dinner in the pinewood? Their long shadows lie behind them, and the whole concourse is sinister and fatal as each druidess moves or manipulates her shade. The Abbess has become immensely tall and all the nuns are angular and bony. They appear to grow as you look at them. It gives the air of absolute antiquity, as though they were older than the trees, or than any wood which puts forth green leaves for summer. They look like creatures of the dark come out, in presumption, while it is still day, for a banquet of funguses and toadstools. Till the light dies —when there is sighing and sweet breath up in the boughs, of odorous gums and unguent dropping balsams. And then, once more, it is a simple holiday or picnic, the Romaria. But, ended. The Abbess mounts her mule again. A creaking and groaning comes from the ox-cart wheels. And the nuns go back slowly to the convent, to the columbarium, where the cells have been empty all day. Their white wings, and black heads and necks, soon make the cloisters live again. Seeing which, we may wish, and wish in vain to-day, that breaking of the silence. For they are gone away for ever, though the beauty of Aveiro lies in those temporary and fragile things that have the look of yesterday, and that inspired us to the Romaria.

Any person who loves, as we do, such forgotten places, will find delight and poetry in Oporto, in the old convent of Santa Clara. This town of camellias, for nowhere else are they so smooth and beautiful as in the quintas of the Douro, must be looked down on from above, from a church tower in its midst, because of its tiled roofs. Each old house would seem to have a staircase well that is carried up into a pavilion or gazebo, even if it be no bigger than a large birdcage. There are many hundreds of these windowed turrets; indeed they, and the lichened tiles, are the feature of Oporto. They are to be admired from the terrace in front of the Sé, or cathedral, where you can lean on the balustrade and see them far below you, or a few feet from you. The harmony or contrapuntal variety in these utilities of another age, their curious identity, and the problem of what persons must have lived there, made me think of nothing else than the 'Clock' Symphony of Haydn. One after another, in their different tones, I heard the ticking and the chiming of those clocks in the midnight stillness



## *Convent of Santa Clara*

of his adagio, broken here, as it would be, by nasal voices and the noises of the town, but no less magical for that. I have never seen another town that could have this appearance on a moonlit night, such proximity and mystery, such a serenading of cats, from their terraces and hanging gardens.

On another steep hill amid these houses stands the convent of Santa Clara, of old foundation, for it was built by the Queen of Portugal, Donna Philippa de Lencastre, daughter of John of Gaunt. No one ever comes here, and it is nearly impossible to find the sacristan or key. To those persons who have seen it, the interior of this church will have given an impression such as is to be had from few other places in Europe, or indeed, in any other land where the art of the baroque age is made credible in its sumptuary magnificence. The gilded ceiling of Santa Clara and its high altar could only be described as a glittering cavern, but seeped and penetrated in its own refulgence. Here, again, is the gold of Aveiro; or, as we know it to be, of Minas Gerães in Brazil. Nowhere else than in Portugal is this gilding to be seen. In the town below, down by the harbour, there is magnificent gold carving in the church of San Francisco, but it cannot compare with that of Santa Clara. A proscenium arch, as in a Bibiena theatre, rises over the high altar, and this, like a transformation scene or the apotheosis in a ballet, has golden and winged figures standing on volutes, under gilded canopies, or alighting on the golden boughs and branches. Within this, another proscenium frames the altar, behind which the massed reliquaries proceed upward in diminishing tiers of dazzling, theatrical perspective. The effect of this whole interior of Santa Clara is difficult to describe in words, but, assuredly, it is one of the major beauties of baroque art. We see it without its figurants, for the nuns are dispossessed. This is not the little world of Aveiro. They are urban ladies; or, so far as their clausura is concerned, hermitesses on a hill in the middle of a town. They could look out, as we did, from the balustrade before the Sé and hear the noises of the city. They knew the moonlight on the roofs of tiles, and, of a morning, looked down on the rabelos, the wine boats of the Douro with their square lateen sails and their gigantic rudders worked by a helmsman from a high platform at the back. There would be the countrymen who came down with the grapes: peasant women of

## *The Portuguese Nun*

Tras-Os-Montes with round tambour hats and the capa de horas, a cloak or mantle of parti-coloured cloth, worn with a great hood, and heavy golden jewellery of Gondomar. Sometimes, also, a shepherd from the mountains of Estrêla. They wear thatched cloaks of straw, like a coat of yellow reeds, and their homes are conical or beehive huts upon the green flanks of the hills, among their flocks. They are Celestial peasants from old maps or chests of lacquer, not out of place in this steep town of tilted roofs and miradors.

But we have not done with Portugal. Our subject takes us to Beja, in the Alentejo, to the convent of the Portuguese Nun. Her name was Mariana Alcoforado. She lived in the seventeenth century, and is known to the world for her intrigue, and her letters, with a Frenchman, the Chevalier de Chamilly. We must describe, however, the approach to Beja. This is in the South, for it borders on Andalusia. For mile after mile there is a straight road across the plain. Sometimes, to either side, there are rows of eucalyptus trees, with the nests of storks high in their branches, in sign of Barbary or Tartary, or the far Orient. The white pallor of this landscape is extraordinary. It is not the white of snow or dust. The colour seems to come to it from its immensity. There is no shade at all except the eucalyptus. Presently far away, a white pyramid is seen, with other simple, cubical shapes at its foot, on a hill in the very middle of the landscape. That is Beja. But the simplicity of its bare outlines is how the imagination would conceive of Andalusia. This is exactly the setting devised by Picasso for the Spanish ballet of de Falla. We see the white walls, the simple black cube windows. The walls, sometimes, have drawings in charcoal done upon them. We could almost find the curtained door, with the miller and his wife behind it, and await the entrance of the Corregidor. It is a white square, or plaza. And, far away, through a white archway, there is another town, a simple cube or pyramid in the distance, and the blue sky. It is as though the painter, in letting his imagination escape into the endless plain of Andalusia, had reached to the far side of it, to the Alentejo.

The Portuguese Nun, Sœur Marianne, lived in the convent of the Conceição, founded two hundred years before by the Infante D. Fernando, father of the great Emmanuel I. Her grille, which suggests in simile the spokes of her fan, has been removed from

### *Convent of the Conceição*

the convent to the local museum. It was through this barred window that she spoke to the Chevalier de Chamilly in the true tradition of this land of serenades. The chapel of this desecrated nunnery is yet another of the baroque chapels of Portugal, not less sumptuous than that of Aveiro. Were we continuing South into the Algarve, we would find another specimen at Faro, on the Atlantic, upon the hottest shore, summer and winter, of all Europe. There must be other such chapels in the small towns of the interior, places never visited nor described in books; Elvas, for instance, of the sugarplums, Castelo do Vide, or Portalegre, again with its convent of the Conceição. But, here and now, at Beja, we go from the chapel to the chapterhouse of the nuns, a high, vaulted hall which has mauresque tiles or azulejos upon its walls, only comparable to those in the Casa de Pilatos, at Seville. The lights from their metallic lustre form so unexpected a setting for one of the lesser masterpieces of French literature. Sœur Marianne must have dreamed here, against her conscience, of the Paris of Le Roi Soleil.

Outside, for the Conceição is in the middle of the town, a military band is practising through the hot afternoon. They play in a room of the barracks, once another convent or a monastery near by. I am not the only traveller to have heard them. Their programme is Albeniz, and music of the Spanish zarzuela, pasadobles, quick marches, as of 'eyes-right' to the bull ring and the brave toreros, but slightly mocking, in mock heroic of the music hall; quick waltzes, estudiantinas, military fanfares, the trumpets of Bibataubin. Never could the music of popular and legendary Spain be so appropriate as here, and, nowhere else, so well performed. It was tempting to wait until the evening, when they played in the garden underneath the trees. Here, indeed, would be a banquet and an intoxication for the senses. Not a feast, exactly, but a public bar, a place of summer drinks while this lively music lasted. Sœur Marianne, or her phantom body, would be listening at her grille. Along the white alleys, as now, there are shadows talking at the casements. They are the serenaders. Under the white archway, far away toward Spain, that other town is a mirage, a pyramid, against the starlit sky. The Chevalier de Chamilly, cloaked, is in the square and hears the music; or gone, gone, to the Castillo di Bibataubin.

## Seville

Borne upon the same pinions, we come down into a crowded street, hear more music, and watch a procession of black penitents. It is the moment of the *Tocado da Gloria*, when all the church bells sound together. Statues of saints are sailing through the streets in clouds of flowers and glittering candles. The charivari of voices is broken by the strident, wavering cry of the sacta, the impromptu 'arrow of song', of Gitano or Flamenco inspiration, uttered by the Gypsies as certain statues pass before them. Their rhapsodic voices, only wrung with penitence and sorrow, speak the sufferings of the Virgin, who is sculptured in her agony, weeping and crying. In midst of this the *Tocado*, at midday, is indescribable in excitement, a clashing of cymbals as loud as thunder, or the roar of cannon. Their beat and rhythm intoxicate the imagination.

A few more days in Seville and it will be the *Feria*, which I have only seen to the extent of driving through the town on the way to Cordoba, upon the second morning of the Fair. A light rain was falling and the majos, or cavaliers, were riding in the streets dressed *á l'Andaluz*, in tight trousers, short black pea jackets, with the hard rimmed sombrero, brown, grey, or black, worn at a rakish angle, and their majas seated behind them on the cruppers of their saddles. The majos have a wonderful air on horseback from their thin figures and the way they hold themselves; the majas wore white dresses, with high combs and white mantillas. Later, in the evening, there will be dancing in the *casetas*, or open booths, along the *calle San Fernando*, between the walls of the *Alcazar* and the tobacco factory of *Carmen*. They dance, all night long, to guitars and castanets. The dance is the *seguidilla*, which in its snap and sparkle is the fountain, the fan, and the dust of the *Triana*; the dry fire of *Manzanilla*, or softer *Amontillado*; the strumming guitar and the mechanical piano. But it is enough, surely, to have seen the cavaliers and their majas riding in the rain on the morning of the *Feria*.

## *Campania*

to the worship of the Holy Virgin. But we are approaching Naples and have not reached the city, yet. From Capua, thirty miles away, you can see Vesuvius and the isle of Ischia. In this town there is an immense convent that is a foretaste of Naples with the grilles of its exterior and the huge frames of white stucco upon the chapel walls. From now onwards, it is Campania, the plain of Naples. The vines are trellised as high as the roofs of the small houses. This is the land of Pulcinella, the farmer of the plain, in his loose white shirt and trousers; or working, naked, in the heat of summer. The dust thickens into a yellow haze. Through it, for we are journeying a hundred years ago, dash the calessos and the carricolas, special forms of two-wheeled, open carriages, driven at full gallop with furious cracking of the whip. The horses have elaborate and jingling harness with brass amulets and little bells, their manes are strung with artificial flowers, and pheasants' tail feathers wave above their heads. These carriages are crowded with everybody who can cling to them, old men and monks, young women and many children. It is as exciting as an ancient chariot race. The suburbs begin. There are stone pinetrees, and villas of yellow stucco with the golden-yellow sunset on them. And, suddenly, the town, just as the darkness thickens.

But our object in coming to Naples is in order to visit the convent of San Gregorio Armeno, which lies in the oldest part of the town, between the Strada de' Tribunali and the Strada San Biagio, but is nearly impossible to find. The church is never open, but I used to know the den or ground floor dwelling where the key was kept. It is enough description to say that the interior has a carved and gilded ceiling of the cinquecento, that the church has paintings by Giordano and Solimena. The floor is of inlaid marbles. High above is the nuns' choir, near to the golden carvings. On the right hand side of the church, when you face the altar, there is a grille or open window, through the squares of which and, perhaps, profiting by that, as do the figures in a squared drawing, a nun, or nuns, come down a great staircase and a vista of white doors and archways. These nuns are Benedictines, but belonging to a rare division of that order about whom it is impossible to discover any information, as it is, indeed, about St. Gregory the Armenian. Their habit is black, with a dark

## *San Gregorio Armeno*

red or crimson under bodice, of which the edges can be seen. One of them will come down into the church and busy herself, though she will not act as guide, nor answer questions; but the fascination, out of this magnificence amid the slums of Naples, is to look through that grille into the white arches and corridors of the convent. For its interior is absolute mystery and unknown, as inaccessible in its clausura as the harem of an Arabian Emir. The probability is that it may have fine architecture, a frescoed refectory, perhaps, or other paintings. San Gregorio Armeno and its convent occupy a large space of ground right in the middle of the town. It is interesting, also, to walk round to the back of the church, where is the entrance to the convent. There used, at one time, to be a long line of booths or stalls selling sacred images, statuettes of saints, and figures of sinners in the flames of hell. Near by, would be other stalls of the red water melons, cut into thick slices, with their big black seeds, straw flasks of wine, bladders of mozzarella, macaroni in its hundred kinds. The street slopes down. On the left there is a high church tower of red and yellow stucco. An archway connects this with San Gregorio Armeno, upon which stands a copper statue of a saint, green with verdigris. The nimbus round his head has wild snapdragons sprouting from it. Not far away, another building, part of a church or monastery, has a window and balcony of fantastic design, and a roof like a pagoda. Below this, is the doorway of the convent with a ramp leading up to it and, within, a screen or parti-wall and the glimpse of a green cloister. No one knows what lies beyond. The cloister may have a vineyard with walks of majolica, as at the great nunnery of Santa Chiara, a hundred yards away. All is mystery and conjecture, with an especial fascination for persons, like myself, who have found inspiration in the glittering architecture of Fansaga, in the Certosa di San Martino, high above the town, and who have wandered through forgotten Naples looking for the double geometrical staircases of Ferdinando Sanfelice, and the frescoes of Solimena or Luca Giordano. Such neglected things can form a private world.

The old Kingdom of Naples, which had two hundred and eighty thousand monks and priests and nuns, has so many simpler beauties such as the convent of Santa Rosa, on the cliffs above Amalfi, hanging

## *Monastic Pharmacies in Naples*

indeed, over the mouth of a huge cavern. It is a low white-washed building, barrel-roofed, and in the style of Capri, and the Greek Islands. This is almost Meteora, so extraordinary is its site. The way up to it was by stone steps as steep as a ship's ladder. There are other nunneries behind Salerno, near Nocera de Pagani, the birthplace of Solimena, and in the land that saw the labours of San Alphonso Liguori. All are in the local style of building, the whitewash of Santorin or of the Barbary coast, with pillars of white stucco and a pergola of vines. One convent, in the vale of Majori, made a liqueur, the Concierto, from no less than fifty different herbs and flowers. This dates back, in origin and in idea, to the time of San Alphonso Liguori, one of whose foundations was near by. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the monks and nuns were famous for such preparations. This was the case, as we have said before, in Portugal.

Innumerable were the cakes and sweetmeats for which the different convents of Palermo were famous. They prepared them for the various feasts and festivals of the church, and for weddings and receptions. The nuns were among the first to make ices and sorbets from the snow of Etna. It was the same in Messina, that destroyed centre of seventeenth century life with its palaces and convents, and in every small town of Sicily and Southern Italy. De La Lande's *Travels*, published in 1790, say, of Naples: 'l'apothicairerie des Minimes (l'église San Luigi di Palazzo) est une des plus renommées de Naples, par les compositions qu'on y débite, et l'on y voit aussi des peintures de Paul de Matteis', of Santa Catarina a Formello, 'église des Dominicains de la congrégation de Lombardie', he writes. 'Il y a dans le convent une apothicairerie riche et fameuse, où l'on voit une collection d'histoire naturelle et d'antiquité', of the monastery of Monte Oliveto, 'La bibliothèque du convent est considérable, aussi bien que l'apothicairerie, qui donne sur la rue de Toleda, et qui est renommée pour les odeurs, les pommades et les savons parfumés qu'on y débite. Ce convent est d'une étendue prodigieuse, il y a quatre grand cloîtres et une multitude d'appartements', and he mentions, as well, 'l'apothicairerie' of the Certosa di San Martino.\* All of these are now gone. They were swept

\* Quite different were the tastes of Rome. De La Lande mentions no 'farmacia' or 'spezieria', as they were sometimes called, and only says of. 'S

## *Tournus*

away with the Bourbon Kings in 1861. There still remains, though, a perfect specimen of the 'farmacia' of the eighteenth century, in the Ospizio dei Incurabili, though no traveller ever sees this. It is contained in a whole set of apartments; first of all, a room painted blue, with blue and white majolica jars upon the shelves and a ceiling of blue stucco carved and painted so as to represent a blue curtain or drapery; the counter in this room is a long walnut table with fine carved legs; behind, are other rooms with arm-chairs in green damask, old portraits, and an incredible display of other pots of majolica, of flagons and jars of glass, and of floors inlaid with majolica tiles. No other such 'farmacia' is in existence.

Now, and at last, we know the true profession of the nuns. If we want the idyllic picture of them, in their rightful setting, there is no better instance than at Tournus, in Burgundy, in the pharmacy of the hôtel-Dieu. This is late seventeenth century, of the last years of Le Roi Soleil. It has row after row of phials and bottles, on their carved and gilded shelves, labelled eau de fleur d'oranges, eau de bergamotte, eau d'arquebusade, and other names, of which the catalogue, alone, would be a delight in itself.

Cosimato, *église des religieuses de Ste Claire* les religieuses de ce couvent sont celles qui passent pour travailler le mieux les fleurs artificielles, surtout celles qui se fait avec la soie, à l'égard des fleurs de plume, je parlerai plus bas de celles qui se font dans une maison particulière vers la place Colonne. On a, à S. Cosimato, une très belle rose pour trois paules, une aigrette, formée de quarante petites fleurs pour dix paules, ou cinq livres sept sous de France! There are, still, monastic pharmacies at the Certosa di Trisulti and at the Benedictine Abbey of Casamari, between Naples and Rome, the French Cistercians of the Abbey of Tre Fontane, outside Rome, sell a liqueur made of the eucalyptus, and the Trappists of San Calixto, who show the catacombs, are famous for their chocolate. In Florence, the pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella, once Dominican, and working since 1622, has been known for three centuries for its preparations, for its liqueur, Alkermes, and its preparations of orris root (*Iris fiorentina*), while the Certosa di val d'Emo has, also, a pharmacy with chocolates and liqueurs. France, before the Revolution, had its monasteries and convents that were famed for such things. The liqueur of the Pères Chartreux, though later in date, is their descendant. Ancient Poland was another centre of such monastic manufactures. The great, and but little read, Pan Tadeusz, of Mickiewicz, which is so replete with the customs of old Poland, extols the snuff and mead, or hydromel, of the Bernardines of Kowno, and the not less famous snuff of the Paulist monastery of Czenstochowa. Kowno, of course, is the present Kaunas, capital of the native Lithuania of Mickiewicz. This particular passage in Pan Tadeusz comes not long after the famous description of the different mushrooms found in the Lithuanian forest, one of the most delightful episodes in the whole poem.



### *Les Moissonneurs of Couperin*

But, at Tournus, we need not keep to fact, even though the cold list of names would be poetry. We can allow imagination to wander: character can create itself out of the names and associations of those distilled waters, and we have music that is the portrait of a person.

It is a piece for clavecin by François Couperin-Le-Grand, and the name of it is *La Sœur Monique*. We may listen to that, but once, and we will have her picture in our minds. Perhaps her whole character lies in the syllables of her name that, in themselves, are the cold, ripe tones of the harpsichord, that spell their own pure sweetness and want no recompense. Its sound is of purity in the cold, high notes. And, to begin with, it is so old fashioned and so slow. The music and the person are older in date than the age in which they lived. This is always so with Couperin. We hear it so, again and again. But let us listen to more music and come back then, knowing him, to *La Sœur Monique* in her convent.

The reapers of *Les Moissonneurs* come from long, long ago. The golden cornfield, with red poppies in it, that are red like drops of blood or like the coats of soldiers, only thinner and finer, for the noon is cloudless and the lark sings in the sky, stands for July or August from a calendar of months. Far away, there is a castle, white as chalk, above the poplared river. It is the landscape of Jehan Foucquet. The reapers are the serfs or villeins, living in magpie houses. The music is slow and regular, like the sweeping of their sickles, and we are never quite among them. They are working on the brow of the hill, beyond the blue cornflowers, and only now and then we hear their voices, when the wind blows down towards us and bends the hosts of corn. And yet, and yet, it has the time and measure of a slow gavotte. It is a peasant dance, called *Les Moissonneurs* not because it attempts a direct description of the scene, but for the reason that once our ears are tuned down to its gradual beauties of the province or the countryside we get the spirit of the reapers in that steady rhythm. This is the country France of three hundred, or five hundred, years ago, many leagues from anywhere, or just outside the town. It does not matter, there is all the country in that air.

Or we hear *Les Vergers Fleuris*, which could be no time but April. What does it mean? How comes it that, again, these slow

## *Musette de Taverny*

and simple beauties evoke a thicket of green boughs, the stems of elders, it may be, that are but beginning to thrust forth their leaves? But listen once more. The notes of the harpsichord are like the pith and sap; there is nothing, this time, but the green boughs alone. Not a man, not a woman: and, yet, these are the virgin stems; there is a dryad, a maiden or virgin, running from the bough. But no more, no more than that. This is the mystery of the blossoming or flowering boughs, and it is over, the piece is ended, before the buds can open. So long, long ago, near the millstream, perhaps, close to the miller's golden daughter. How old and enchanting is the berceuse, *Le Dodo, ou l'Amour au Berceau*. This, by its own confessing, is so much older than its time. It is the grandmother singing while she rocks the cradle, who could remember, almost, to the sixteenth century, and sang as they had sung to her. O how one would love to listen, and to ask her many things. We are all small children, when age is so very very old as that, and we would go to sleep and dream a little and forget our time. O what, what is she singing? It would make one weep to say.

The piece called *Le Moucheron* is a simple merrymaking, with no sadness, nor nostalgia, a country dance, or, more, the echo of it. And, yet, it is not so simple, for the harpsichord, of course, stands in a room; while the mood of the music is outdoors, but it is like someone upon a country walk, thinking of a country dance. *La Musette de Taverny*, by contrast, is a little masterpiece of what must have passed in its time for modernity and is, therefore, more sinister than sad. It begins with the sounds of a wandering musician, or two, perhaps Savoyards, playing outside the houses, and it would seem as if you are given time to come up to them, for the music increases in clearness and has a curious, high trill, like the held notes of a little horn or trumpet. They are wandering musicians, come from far, and a little frightening in their ragged clothes. Those high trills, especially, are done to frighten and to hold attention. Heaven knows what adventures they may have had, near the gallows, and in thieves' dens. One of the musicians may, easily, have an only arm or leg. There seems to be in their music a stump, or an amputated limb. And they end with that trill once more, and we wonder what it means, and where was Taverny! *Les Vieilleux et les Gueux: les Jongleurs*,

## *L'Arlequin of Rameau*

*Sauteurs et Saltimbanques*, with its long title, is the complete picture of a country fair. It is hurdygurdy music, exceeding slow and grinding. The hurdygurdy is never gay or sprightly. It is the soul of music chained in torment, to an action of marionettes or dummies. We seem to hear the heavy, captive tread of a bear from the Carpathians, and his lumbering walk as he is led in among the crowd. It could be the same bear as in *Petrushka*. His fate has not changed. Men and women come to him to stroke his fur. He walks upright; but is led along with rope and cudgel, with his jaws bound, and all his claws clipped short. The jugglers and acrobats perform their tricks. They are mere tumblers, with bodies that no longer bruise.

What a distance from this to *l'Arlequin* of Rameau! In that, you have the bright movements of Harlequin and his chequered colours, the Harlequin of the Italians and of Watteau. That piece is one of music's secondary enchantments. How can it be that there is a masked Harlequin who is hidden in that music and comes forth in it! The music is a dance and, also, a reverie or meditation. It is a delight to hear it once, and have it played again, so changing and subtle is that breath of magic. For he changes with it. He is never twice the same. His sharp colours are the stuff of poetry, though that part of the music which is reverie or meditation presents him in the nostalgia that is half of his true rôle. It ends. But we would hear the piece again, again, to catch his bright colours and try to snare him in our memory. Rameau, an exceptional case, was fifty years old when he began to compose music for the theatre. Whether the little *l'Arlequin* was written before, or after that, we do not know. It could belong to the period of his great ballet music, or it may be an early piece, proving only that his mind was in the theatre. There is none of this in Couperin. *Les Jongleurs*, *Sauteurs et Saltimbanques* dance to the hurdygurdy. It is a village entertainment.

Was there occasion to wander further in the enclosed paradise of Couperin, or, indeed, of other French composers for the harpsichord, past *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* to *Les Langueurs Tendres*, listening in that green wood to *Le Gazouillement*, till we hear *La Passecaïlle* and are among *Les Folies Françaises* ou *les Dominos*, continuing until along the avenue we hear on the

## *Portrait of Sœur Monique*

wind Le Carillon de Cythère and see approaching down the formal waters of the canal Les Gondoles de Délos, we would have familiar acquaintance with the most private world of music there has ever been. There are, only occasionally, these sounds from outside it, the notes of the musette or the hurdygurdy: in all else it is as claustral and protected as La Sœur Monique

It is the portrait of a person who is young and tender. If you walk in Avignon, not in its great buildings, but to the little chapels of the Pénitents-Gris and the Pénitents-Noirs, with their simple elegancies and their charming, but indifferent, paintings by Mignard and by Parrocel, you will have the picture of Sœur Monique, for it is the beauty of character without intellect, that finds her happiness in the simplicities, in sacrifice of self and in human kindness. The music gives to her a personal beauty that is, in part, the regret of this sheltered world for a person who has given up such exquisite but restricted pleasures. She lives within, and yet outside them, in the cold cell of a convent. You can see nothing of her but her face and hands. Her dress is the mediaeval habit of her order, old and of the middle ages, even two hundred years ago. We wonder if she ever thinks, now, of her family, of her brothers and sisters, for she is in the early 'twenties, at an age when she might have little children of her own. All of them will have been present on the night when she took the veil. That spring evening she was lost and gone from them for ever. Now there is the cloister garden and the flowers and herbs.

In her name, too, we hear the sound of glass retorts and phials, we smell the essences and distillations. By this, she takes a ghostly lover from the fruits and flowers, and keeps him in a glass prison for a year or many years. It is Isabella and her pot of basil. O listen to the music! Beauty and innocence walk hand in hand in it. By what miracle is it possible for there to be this portrait in those simple notes? And not alone the physical, but the spiritual image. For the music is resigned, it has the shape of beauty in its motion, which could be Sœur Monique dressed in white, walking slowly and, always, looking down. We know that her body, which is young and beautiful, must be disused beneath her habit, must be smooth and like a tailor's mannikin, that her limbs would move as awkwardly as that. Her face would be as impassive as the mannikin, a thing of wax, or wood. We never see the hair of

## *Myroblites*

Sœur Monique, and we wonder if her head is shaved. It is like thinking of a cold, dead corpse, but uncorrupted, one of those saints who exhaled sweetness and balm from their unblemished bodies.\* We must think of that lovely miracle, the head of St. Catherine in its reliquary in Siena, the head of a young virgin girl who lived six hundred years ago. The sight of her poor head is a beautiful physical experience, owing to the rapturous peace of her closed eyes and pale face and lips. The prince of peace, the young prince of the heavenly pantomime, has come down, winged like Hermes, and has left her with a kiss. She was exhaled, she died, with his breath upon her lips, and, at the touch of him, her soul rose up and left this wicked earth. It is the rapture of sweet music, that brings tears, and that nothing can explain. The face is waxen and bloodless, but at peace and dreaming, not sleeping—and in pain. The rapture has hurt her and she has died of it.

Such was the death of the saint. And Sœur Monique waits for that. The expectation comes again and again in this soft music. When the tune comes back she is walking in her white habit in the garden. Her head is bowed. There is a happy peacefulness that is quite beyond expression. This is an innocent country person, nurtured in the woods and meadows with the ducks and geese and with the woolly lambs, not the picture of wisdom but of quiet contentment. And now we hear in her name an echo of the cool stone walls of her imprisonment. She will never be the abbess, but will live and die a simple nun. Such is Sacred Love within the four walls of the convent. She will grow old here. But that is not the burden of this simple music. It is the image of a young nun. Sacred Love, or sacrifice and devotion, implies youth and beauty carried to the altar. It is lifelong imprisonment. The music achieves what is impossible in breaking down the walls, in giving back her youth to her, unsullied, uncorrupted, sweet smelling and gentle, like a spring evening while

\* Such saints are known as the *Myroblites*. Among their number are included St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Nicholas of Myra (buried at Bari), St. Vitalian, St. Lutgard, St. Walbruga, St. Rose of Viterbo, St. Willibrod, the Apostle of Holland, St. Hedwige of Poland, St. Eustochium, Blessed Mathia de Nazzareti, a Poor Clare of Matelica, St. Agnes of Montepulciano, a Dominican nun; St. Maria Maddelena de Pazzi, and the ecstatic Carmelite Marguerite van Valkenissen, foundress of the convent of Oirschot in Brabant.

## *Jesuatesses*

she was still young. She has her secrets that are in prison with her, but we are not told them. Music does not tell us everything. That is its mystery, and the secret in the virginal.

The course of Sacred Love would lead us on to examine so many persons and so many places. What would be appropriate to this moment are the Gesuati, an order founded by Blessed John Colombini (1300-67) in the fourteenth century but who were dissolved by Clement IX in 1669, for the principal reason that their whole labour was the distilling of liqueurs and perfumes. Because of that they had a special nickname. It should be possible to write a particular study of this honey hive and its proclivities, a more poetical subject than manual labour, or than working in the monastic vines. The Jesuatesses, females of this order, were more ascetic, they were, indeed, the most austere of all the nuns, being enjoined to fast almost in perpetuity, never to eat meat, to keep perpetual silence, and, twice a day, to flagellate or chastise their bodies. These nuns were in existence, in Rome, until as late as 1873. Apart from the more obvious regiments of nuns, Carmelites or Franciscans, Poor Clares or Benedictines, there are so many curious divagations. Theatine or Celestine convey in the sound of their names an indication of the scene in which they worshipped. In spite of their earlier foundation it would be, generally, architecture of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

The Discalced Franciscan, or Capuchiness, is to be met with in our day upon the dusty roads of Italy, in her brown habit, with sandalled feet, and wearing an immense straw hat with its wide brims bound down into her wimple. Two by two, and never singly, they toil upon the long hill leading down, down, to the town of lilies. We meet them, in April or May, creeping along the white walls, below banks of blue iris. They are peasants of the fourteenth century, contemporary in date to the St. George of Pisanello, in his white hat with its flapping brims and his coat of lambskin worn above his armour. Cypress and stone pine stand near the vineyards. Then, as now, there would be the smell of beanfields in the Tuscan air. Nuns of Camaldoli, Camaldulense, were a Tuscan invention, found nowhere else, and living in their hermitages in the high woods of the Casentino. Their foundation by St. Romuald, a nobleman of Ravenna, as early as the year

## *Camaldoli*

1012, preserves for us the dress of humble persons of the eleventh century, nearly a thousand years ago. It is a white woollen habit; and with the monks of Camaldoli, for we have never seen the nuns, there is an air that is half-Druidical. These Tuscan hermits, each dwelling in his little separate hermitage, are priests of the oaktrees and the Vallombrosan shades. For half the year they have to sweep the snow away in order to pass from their houses to the convent chapel. The hoods of their white habits are of a different shape from the mediaeval hoods of other kinds of monks. This is not the Gothic of the Tre or Quattrocento, but an earlier age before the birth of painting. It is earlier in appearance than the Carthusian habit, which is nearly its contemporary. The Carthusians, in fact, have points of resemblance to the Camaldulese, both being robed in white, and both seeking for preference in their early days the 'deserts' or forest, in the case of the Carthusians that of the Grande Chartreuse in Dauphiné and the Serra di San Bruno in remote Calabria. But the Carthusians have still some convents, while the Camaldulese are nearly confined to their original Camaldoli, and to the monastery of Bielany, near Cracow, in Poland, of which the present writer has seen, and admired, the seventeenth century white baroque church. The monks of Camaldoli, then, are an extreme monastic rarity. In the deep shade of their forest they do really come down to us from an antique age.

Of other Hermitesses much, also, might be said. Those belonging to the Celestine order had their convents in the South on the spurs of the Apennines as they descend into the Abruzzi. This was the country of Celestine V, the founder of the Celestines, and his huge monastery stands outside Sulmona, in midst of this neighbourhood. These Hermitesses wore a white habit with a pale blue scapulary. But the details of these confraternities of nuns can become a fascination in themselves. There are orders who are quite forgotten, now, and who call before the mind paintings by the Sienese school, by Sassetta, or Sano di Pietro; and, at other moments, extravagant and fantastic scenes, subjects for Callot or for Goya. But no history of these sacred virgins has ever considered them in the light of this. The books of pious writers have only related them to worship and to charity. That is their vocation; but it is no description of them. Perhaps it needs someone with no

## *Fra Angelico da Fiesole*

religion to be spectator of their drama. We would have the legends of the nunneries; flowers and birds of the Franciscans; magpie Dominicans; scenes of hawking or hunting in the virgin woods; abbesses who were princesses, and who ruled their lands, the costumes of their companies and cohorts, the calefactorium, an open hearth where the Capuchinesses warmed their bare feet, the penance of the Hermitesses; monastic picnics, like the Romaria; concerts of sweet voices, music of Haydn and Marcello. The music comes later, but these devotees or priestesses of Sacred Love have a mystical or psychic poetry which must reveal itself to anyone who thinks of them, splendours and miseries that are beyond compare, austerities that are like, in kind, to feats of athletic endurance, rapturous experiences that have no parallel, miracles of fasting, marks of the stigmata, with bleeding where the nails were, and the marks of scourging, ecstasies that no poet or musician has experienced; all for Sacred Love, with no reward upon earth

We have said that their early histories compare to paintings of the Sienese school. They are only to be thought of in the poses or deformations of that spirit. But, also, there is Fra Angelico; and their backgrounds are his rose-pink buildings. The woodwork is new grained and fresh; churches with façades of marble, at Orvieto, to choose an instance, would be in the colours of a wedding cake. Gold still glistened. The briar rose had no dust upon its leaves. He had heard the cuckoo and the nightingale in a dawn that had no throbbing, no panting of an engine. Distant towns upon their hills were like the heavenly Jerusalem. There was wonder in everything, and a primal innocence, in the butterfly's wing, in the crest of the oriole, or in the daisied meadows. Sacred Love had its colleges in every town and in the wilderness.

As time went on, until the end of time, which was near unto this present, there was this flowering or renewal. After three more centuries we would find those other scenes which are grotesque or fantastic but have, also, their own beauties of another sort. Who could deny beauty to the last flowering of that spirit? We could find it in little masterpieces of fantasy and elegance, North of the Alps, in the works of the Asam brothers, Egid Quirin and Cosmos Damian, supreme masters of their kind, in the chapel of the Ursuline nuns at Straubing, or at Osterhofen



## *Concerts of Sweet Voices*

in the convent of the Englische Fraulein, a rare order, both convents being in Bavaria. But that would be mere repetition of our former praises. So, at the mention of music, and Marcello's name, we are in Venice.

We spoke of concerts of sweet voices. There were four conservatoires of music, La Pietà, l'Ospedaletto, I Mendicanti, Gli Incurabili. De La Lande says of them: 'Le gout de la musique d'église y est très gai et même dansant, elle diffère peu de la musique théâtrale, . . . La Pietà est celle des quatre qui a le plus de réputation pour la bonne musique et la force des instruments, les Mendicanti pour l'excellence des voix, la musique s'exécute derrière un grillage peu ferré, et l'on a le plaisir d'y voir des musiciennes excellentes toucher leurs instruments avec délicatesse, avec grâce, et avec la force et la science des meilleurs maîtres. Le patricien protecteur de la maison, ou les personnes en place, peuvent faire entrer un étranger dans l'intérieur. C'était aux Mendicanti que chantoit la fameuse Padovana, il y a quelques années; ou y admira en 1784, la Sacchetti et la Pavana. . . La Pietà, où il n'y a que des enfans illégitimes. On voit dans cette église un plafond du Tiepolo, mais ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable c'est une excellente musique, exécutée par les filles de la maison. Dans les trois autres conservatoires pareils, on entretient environ cent filles dans chacun, et l'état donne à peu près cent livres pour chacune. Elles vont dans les concerts particuliers et viennent dans les campagnes. Il est permis de les voir dans la maison et de leur faire du bien.' It was not only sweet voices but the music of violins.

This was the decay of the Serenissima, a spectacle, or sunset, of which it was written 'But, most, her shrine where naked Venus keeps, And cupids ride the lion of the deep, Where eased of fleets the Adriatic main Wafts the smooth eunuch and th' enamoured swain.' The implications attached to these four conservatories of music could not be misunderstood. The ravishments of Benedetto Marcello, or of Galuppi, il Buranello (for he came from Burano) had this earthly accompaniment to their harmonies. This is another sort of vestal virgin, who is visible behind the grille, and for whom escape comes on the wings of music. She is to be seen and admired, as at the theatre, like a figurant of the ballet. In this way had the theatre and its arts advanced into the holy temple.

## *The Zattere*

But now our theme, which becomes once more autobiographical and personal, demands the heats of August. For the beauty of this city is as a point of embarkation. Its marble quays are so many landing stages off which you step immediately into the empyrean. Shall we call up the 'Sun of Venice' with sails set for the open main, past Malamocco, where the pomegranate is in flower at only a stone throw from the salt waters of the lagoon? The vessel threads the deep canal of the Giudecca, and in the sky of pearlshell or of hyaline the dome and towers of the Salute hang steep upon the air and have an unexpected impact looked at from this angle, towards the city, and not seen seaward, from its landings of fine stone and marble. For we find ourselves upon the Zattere, the quay or *fondamenta* that lies behind the Dogana and the Salute. If you walk to the end of the quay, by the Custom House, with its globe of Fortune, you look across the waters to the Doge's Palace. Opposite, is San Giorgio Maggiore on its marble quay. But we must fan and blow upon the flames of August. It must be so hot that there is nothing else to think of.

This quay of the Zattere is where the fishing boats and merchant ships are moored. All night long there are the voices of the sailors. To a person whose room looks out upon the Zattere they become almost known, as they talk in their rough dialect. We do not say who lay sleepless in that unshuttered room. In the morning a boat has gone, and another has come in.

They are *trabaccoli* of Venice, coastal trading vessels sailing to Trieste and Istria, or *topi* and *bragozzi* of Chioggia, the fishing town at the far end of the lagoon. Perhaps this is the only part of Venice where there is still something of its old sea history. Until a hundred years ago the foreigners of Carpaccio or Tiepolo were seen here. Now, there are no more of them. And yet, in a burning August, by night or day we meet them, Ragusan sailors, Bosnian merchants, mariners of Traù, in the round black caps of Carpaccio (still worn along Dalmatia), Turkish merchants of Corfu or the Morea, turbans of Egypt or the Bosphorus; the light elastic forms of the Hydriot sailors, their long hair flowing on their shoulders, and with features so constantly regular as to become monotonous, baggy trousered Albanians, aquiline like Pulcinella, in the white fezzes and characteristic cloaks or *capotes*.

### *Paintings of Tiepolo in I Gesuati*

of their country, Shqipnites of whom there is a specimen in every great fresco or painting of Tiepolo. An Albanian attendant or bodyguard; and, in case of necessity, the executioner. We know him by his tall figure and lean features, his red eyebrows, his short, shaved hair. He is always watching, as if his hand was upon the hilt of his sword. He lands with Cleopatra from her golden barge, and stands behind her at the banquet. Thus we see him in the Labia. At Bergamo, in the Cappella Colleoni, he beheads the Baptist. He is a Turkish mercenary, a Janissary, an Arnaut, a Mameluke.

It is with a mind stored with such figures that we remember the Zattere upon an August morning. For there are two quarters of Venice, this—and Sant' Alvise, down the Cannaregio, on the far side of the city whence you see the island of Murano and the Friulian Alps, the mountains of Titian—in which it is necessary to start early in the morning in order to admire Tiepolo. Sant' Alvise and this other church, I Gesuati,\* are closed at nine o'clock; and are only opened, if again, in the dusk of the late evening. I Gesuati belonged, originally, to that order which was suppressed, as we have told, in 1669, because too much of their energies went to the distilling of perfumes and liqueurs. It became, later, a convent of Dominicans; and the paintings of Tiepolo, are, so to speak, Dominican in subject. They consist of a ceiling painting of the festival of the rosary, with a vision of the Madonna, and the triumph or glorification of St. Dominic; and an altarpiece of the Madonna, seated, and holding the infant Jesus. Three Dominican nuns are in the painting; St. Clara caresses the child; another nun holds a crucifix, the third is rapt in meditation.

Such, in bare outline, is the content of the paintings. But, coming here in the early morning or at evening, in those hours of unreal and exaggerated light it was easy to fall into an ecstasy, an intoxication of the senses, something akin to inspiration, a sort of sacred trance with no religion in it, induced by the aerial colours, and from the smell of ships and seaweed coming through the open door. The church is in no way remarkable for its architecture. A façade, like a Palladian temple, in white Istrian stone. But, for our purpose and our enjoyment, it is the better for this.

\* The other name of I Gesuati is Santa Maria del Rosario.

## *Paintings of Tiepolo in I Gesuati*

There is nothing to distract the mind from the paintings, and from this other imagery that fills the mind. Not that they are the most beautiful of all Tiepolo's pictures, but they have every quality that was his. They allow for the completion of his genius. We need not be confined to them. They are the start or inspiration. But, first of all, breathe in the air. This church is on the quay, and but a few paces from the shipping. The trabaccoli, the topi, the bragozzi lie outside. The water chops, chops, against the white stone steps. That other element, the ocean, has a thin August mist, like oil upon its waters. But only for an inch or two above its surface, not more than the steam above a drying pavement. The interior of the Gesuati, or its paintings, exhale a feminine history. We have not attained, yet, to the ends of Sacred Love. We have come, on the contrary, to its climax and its turning point. We see it, here, in apotheosis, soon to break, and trembling, as it were, upon the August airs.

But it is time to lift your eyes. The ceiling painting prolongs our feeling of an embarkation. This is because the painter has extended the perspective, has made an entrance into the azure of his sky, by the device of a great flight of steps. There is a stone landing stage at the church door and, on entering, you climb from the stone island straight into the clouds where the Spanish saint, St. Dominic, rides in glory. He is in the element of the gods of Greece and Rome. His vision of the Virgin puts him into an ecstasy. He is transported by it. His black and white habit, which is no longer in spirit, as in the primitive paintings, the 'domini canis', the black and white 'dog of the lord', but the raiment of a saint, a great ecclesiastic, rules or dominates the painted composition. And his rapt ecstasy is as the magic wings of music. It is something inexplicable that he may not hear or see again, the ghost of Sacred Love, of his life of suffering and austerity revealed to him. And, therefore, this is the person whom he has loved. This is not a great painting, it is a great decoration, by the most consummate decorative painter there has ever been, the heir of three hundred years of Venetian painting. It is only to be expected of Tiepolo that he should paint the Virgin as a beautiful young woman. She floats too far above us to be seen in detail. It is such a vision as you might have of a lovely face in the theatre. You can look, and look again, but it becomes no clearer. This is

### *Paintings of Tiepolo in I Gesuati*

the secret and illusion of the theatre. It was a subject not likely to have inspired Tiepolo, except for this opportunity, and merely as a piece of handling, as a technical display. By the time this was painted the story of St Dominic, or even the festival of the rosary, must have lost any interest that they ever possessed. What will have delighted the painter will have been his arrival, every morning, coming, we may conceive it, round the corner of the Rio di San Trovaso into the open quay of the Zattere. This was the short way from the city, taking the traghetto across the Grand Canal. There is, always, a salt wind blowing at the corner of the Rio and the Fondamenta, a cool breeze from the open sea. Inside the church, a light scaffolding has been erected, with ladders roped and lashed together, and a wooden platform, like a painter's cradle, slung beneath the ceiling. This is where he paints, only at arm's length from the wet plaster. He is at the height of the masthead of any vessels on the Zattere. But such dizzying and dangerous work is nothing to him. He is as used to it as an acrobat to the top reaches of the painted wings.

It is a fine ceiling of Tiepolo. Where shall we place it among his frescoes? We could not compare it with the river gods and the men and women of the four continents of the world, or with the legend of Barbarossa, both at Wurzburg, with the white coursers of the Sun God in the Palazzo Clerici at Milan, with the poetical and architectural wonders of the Palazzo Labia, the disembarkation and the banquet of Cleopatra, with the painted ceiling of the throne room at Madrid. Those are the four master-works of Tiepolo. We prefer, however, this fresco in the Gesuati to the Glorification of the Pisani in the villa of that name in Strà, or to the Villa Valmarana, at Vicenza. We would place it in the second rank of his achievement, with the Triumph of Hercules in the Palazzo Canossa at Verona, or with the ceiling of the Rezzonico family in the Palazzo Rezzonico at Venice, with its white clouds, the circular peristyle or colonnade of its white temple, and its white coursers. These cloud horses, who draw the cloudy chariots, are among the most beautiful of Tiepolo's inventions. Here, in the Gesuati, there is no occasion or excuse for them. He reserved them for his heathen gods and goddesses. For its situation, for its sea-borne circumstances, this may have been among his works that were most congenial to himself. To any

### *Paintings of Tiepolo in I Gesuati*

devotee of this great painter, the loneliness of I Gesuati and its comparative inaccessibility must raise its lovely qualities into a place apart in his achievement.

But, also, the altar painting has beauties of another kind that have brought us here and made it contingent to our present theme. We would say, at once, that it is the finest of his easel paintings. It is a beautiful and an exquisite thing. Sacred Love is trembling on the edge, and has come down to earth. It is the end of a world, for it is the last work of religion and dumb faith. The long robes of the three Dominican nuns are painted as only Tiepolo could paint them. That is to say, the hand that dealt with snowy clouds and lovely bodies has given himself that freedom with their long straight folds. They are his models, the bodies and faces of his predilection, clothed in these long robes that reach the ground. It would be invidious to compare them to the figurants in some superlative revue or ballet, who for the last scene or finale, come on in long dresses that are not of the theatre, which is in theory, to display or give accent to their carnal beauty, but in the long evening dresses of mundanity of another sphere, as if to show them to their admirers in the terms of every day. Here, they are nuns. But the genius of this great painter has descended to no frivolity or prettiness. The figures are of the theatre in the same sense that the Masses of Haydn or Mozart are of the theatre. And we only make use of that term because these figures or inhabitants from out his frescoes live in a sphere of their own, and their transference into an easel painting still leaves them apart and unmistakable. They are as Gypsies or circus folk compared with the ordinary population of the painted canvas.

But the suggested analogy with music of Mozart and Haydn requires more explanation. I believe that no one who looks at this painting with understanding but will think that music is missing in it. The nuns in the picture are ravished by sweet tones. Perhaps, because he could not portray what should have been an ecstasy of religious feeling, he has painted, instead, a trance of music. 'Le gout de la musique d'église y est très gai et même dansant.' Their pale and bloodless faces betray their feeling. In the masses of Mozart and Haydn there are these same foretastes of heaven in terms of what is beautiful on earth. This is the Italian

## *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*

influence. It was borrowed from Italy. In the original, it was the violins and sweet voices of the Mendicanti. We have only the names of those old Italian composers, and their dead music. Nothing can make them live again. The tradition of their great singers is a world lost and gone

But carnal ecstasy, in substitute for an experience of heaven, was one of the secrets of the late Italians in their courtliness and gallantry. In their decline from the gods of the Renaissance, the Italians, among the arts, played the professional seducer. Their music, their gilding, their stucco, pleased the senses. The great instance is the group, by Bernini, of the ecstasy of St. Theresa. It is in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, in Rome. Bernini, a Neapolitan, came from the town of music. His group, in marble, shows an angel in the form of a beautiful, young smiling boy about to pierce the heart of St. Theresa with the arrow of Divine love. The messenger is a Cupid, of dangerous age. The closed eyes and swooning features of St. Theresa are painful, yet lovely, to look upon. Her saintliness is shed from her. She is still young, and becomes a mortal being before it is too late. This is the meaning of the heavenly messenger who descends to her in a golden sunburst that has been set in perpetuity by this genius of the theatre. Again, in this sculptured group, there is analogy to the ravishments of music. If, indeed, the ecstasy of St. Theresa were to be described in language that was a true indication of appearances, but concealed or paralleled their meaning, it could best be done as though in terms of music. The date of this sculptured group—it was completed in 1646—anticipates by nearly a hundred years the altarpiece by Tiepolo in the Gesuati, but the same pagan or terrestrial spirit informs its characters. Yet neither work of art is cynical or sardonic. Both have begun to ask questions of religion, but have answered them on earth. They put forward a pagan interpretation of the mysteries. Cupid's golden arrow is as the spindle or the bodkin that pricks the finger of the Sleeping Beauty. Or, using the symbols of the same story, it is the kiss of the King's son who wakens her from slumber. Her hundred years sleep is the vow that she has taken. For a hundred years she has slept with her court and her attendants sleeping round her. All have brought the same doom upon themselves. I find that this altar painting in I Gesuati

## *Names of Venetian Families*

belongs to the same fairy story, the same myth, except that the nuns or actresses in it are not new to this experience.

### vii

Upon a hot August morning, or in any weather, for I have seen it in the snow, this is a place of inspiration. Not for its entire perfection, to those who find Tiepolo a pleasure and an intoxication, but because its very shortcomings are food for the imagination. Most of all, it wants a blazing morning. Let us hear the names of great Venetians in order to put ourselves into the mood. Grimani, Foscari, Dandolo, Emo, Loredan, Mocenigo, Bragadin, and Delfin Tron. After the masculine Foscari and Grimani, names of Doges and Procurators, with the ring of armour in stone arches, or the crimson velvet of their robes of state, the snarl of trumpets, the noise of swords and daggers, do we not hear sounds of ocean in those other names? Loredan, like a shell held to the ear, speaks of the sea, of feluccas and brigantines, and could not but be the name of a great admiral. Dandolo was Doge, and hero of the waves, Mocenigo sounds like a great name leading out a fleet to battle, Bragadin, the hero of Famagosta, we know was flayed alive, Delfin Tron is the decadence. In that we hear the gliding of the black gondola, and men and women masked like birds. The very name of Tiepolo was that of a great family. His father was, even, a sea captain. Those were days when the fleet of Venice had forty-five galleys and eleven thousand men. That was in the fifteenth century, before the fall of Byzantium. They had, in all, a tradition of seven or eight centuries of shipbuilding. Families, like the Alberghettis, were famed artillerers, and it had become hereditary with them. Waves that lap the white Istrian quays, the chop chop chopping of the waters upon the weed grown steps, the masts and rigging of the Fondamenta; such things are instead of flowers and trees.

We have but to see, in the Doge's Palace, the only painting by Tiepolo among the older masters, a long narrow canvas commissioned from him in order to replace another that was de-



## *Treasures of the Deep*

stroyed by fire, in order to know how Venice of the golden age, two hundred years before, could inspire and descend upon him. The theme of this little painting is Neptune strewing the treasures of the deep at the feet of Venice. Any amateur of Tiepolo to whom this picture is unknown could, almost, people the blank canvas from his imagination. The treasures of the deep would mean rare shells and pearls and corals. Poseidon's water kingdom was a realm in which Tiepolo excelled. Did we know the truth and origin of imagery we would find that this was, indeed, an Indian fantasy, akin to those *Indes Occidentales et Orientales* of which we have already spoken. It was compound of many things. The love for rare shells belonged, in their fancy, to the world of pagodas, to the lacquered noons and evenings of the Indies. They were brought back by sailors from the Spice Islands and the Coromandel coast and were connected in the imagination with the first attempts, in so many places, to make porcelain which could rival that of China. The shells, indeed, in their bright colours and enamel are like a natural porcelain moulded and painted into the myriad shapes of beauty. They came from all over the world, from Greenland and Norway as much as from Surinam or Tranquebar, but in fantasy they were attached, always, to those imagined Indies. Separate studies could be made of the river gods, the Neptunes, the Orientals, or the cloud inhabitants and their white coursers, of Tiepolo. Here and now it is Neptune and his watery kingdom. We must remember the great beauty and value attached to these rare shells, as evidence of what could be considered as a concrete or natural chinoiserie, living proof of those unlikely poetries of the Orient.

A cabinet of shells had its place beside a gallery of paintings. The pleasure of the conchologist expressed itself in many fine folio volumes, and we could follow its influences through sculptured trophies and upon painted ceilings. They are tributes to Neptune, fountains to the sea god in midst of arched piazzas, grottos made of sea shells. As they came in from the seven seas invention lavished itself to give the shells their names. Out of that multitudinous literature we choose the learned Rumphius and Regenfuss. George Eberhard Rumphius was merchant and Dutch Senator for the Isle of Amboyna. This island was centre

## *Amboyna and Ternate*

of the trade in cloves, as was Banda for that of nutmegs. In order to accomplish this the Dutch, who had expelled the Portuguese, would not allow those spices to be grown anywhere else but upon these islands. The naturalist Wallace, writing so late as 1869, in his *Malay Archipelago*, says of Amboyna and the neighbouring Ternate, which were chief islands in the ancient Moluccas: 'all this glitter of barbaric gold was the produce of the spice trade'. He has been quoting the description written by Sir Francis Drake of his visit to the Sultan of Ternate in 1579. Wallace continues. 'Nutmegs and mace were procured from the natives of New Guinea and the adjacent islands, where they grew wild; and the profits on spice cargoes were so enormous, that the European traders were glad to give gold and jewels, and the finest manufactures of Europe or of India, in exchange. When the Dutch established their influence in these seas, and relieved the native princes from their Portuguese oppressors, they saw that the easiest way to repay themselves would be to get this spice trade into their own hands. For this purpose they adopted the wise principle of concentrating the culture of these valuable products in those spots only of which they could have complete control. To do this effectually it was necessary to abolish the culture and trade in all other places, which they succeeded in doing by treaty with the native rulers. These agreed to have all the spice trees in their possessions destroyed.' After mentioning the inhabitants of Amboyna, a cross of Portuguese, Malay, and Papuan, with Dutch, and even with Chinese, Wallace continues 'the fishes and shells of Amboyna are unrivalled for variety and beauty by those of any one spot on the earth. The celebrated Dutch ichthyologist, Dr Bleeker, has given a catalogue of seven hundred and eighty species of fish, alone, found at Amboyna, a number almost equal to those of all the seas and rivers of Europe. A large proportion of them are of the most brilliant colours, being marked with bands and spots of the purest yellows, reds and blues, while their forms present all that strange and endless variety so characteristic of the inhabitants of the ocean. Shells have long been an object of traffic in Amboyna, many of the natives get their living by collecting and cleaning them, and almost every visitor takes away a small collection.'

Rumphius, our learned authority, lived, as we have seen, at

## *Rumphius and Regenfuss*

Amboyna. He published a *Cabinet de Curiosités Amboyniennes*\* with notes by Schynvoet and Halma, and beautiful coloured illustrations by Madame Merian, and by the daughter of that great flower and insect painter. This daughter had, in fact, accompanied her mother upon her voyage to Surinam (Dutch Guiana in South America), and had assisted her in the coloured plates for her great work upon that distant land. We have, then, Rumphius and Franz Michael Regenfuss, an artist from Nurnburg, who wrote and illustrated the most beautiful of all conchological works for his patron, Frederick V of Denmark † The hand illuminated plates, and the extraordinary frontispiece and decorations, mezzotinted in blue, and in sanguine for the Royal copies given away by the King, make of this one of the most lovely of all eighteenth century publications. But we are concerned only, for the moment, with names of shells culled from Rumphius and Regenfuss. Many of the shells were derived from the Danish settlement of Tranquebar, upon the Malabar coast, or from the Îles Frédériciennes, or Virgin Islands, belonging to Denmark, in the West Indies. We find the following: Conques de Vénus, Ecritures Arabiques, Nattes Chinoises, Cliquettes de Lazare, Amiral orangé, Feuille de Laurier, Mores Bandés, Brandons d'Amour, Casques Rouges, Couronnes d'Éthiopie bariolées. We could continue with Pourpres, Mytules, Manteaux Royaux, Bézards. A particular red and yellow shell was called Isabella because of a tulip of that name which it resembled, and we have Coins de Beurre, Doublettes de Tellimes, Cœurs Jaunes, Léopards, Lions Grimpants, because of a pattern like heraldic lions upon their backs. There are Couronnes Papales, Mitres Épiscopales, names that explain themselves, and Drôles de Béguines, called that, by Rumphius, because they resembled in shape the hats of Béguines, an 'heretical religious sect', 'On connoit encore, à présent, en Hollande des filles sous ce nom qui jouissent de certains bénéfices.' There are Langues d'Or, Manteau Polonois, Oreilles de Midas, and Véritables Escaliers à vis, spiral shells with true and reverse spirals like the double staircases practised

\* The first edition was published, in Amsterdam, in 1705. In a subsequent edition, 1742, the plates are much inferior in quality.

† *Recueil de Coquillages, de Limaçons, et de Crustacés*, by F. M. Regenfuss, Copenhagen, 1758. A second volume of twelve plates, without text and unbound, is very rarely to be seen. Regenfuss was a native of Nurnberg.

## *Shoal of Pearls*

in old castles. Couvertures de Lit were so named for their barred and striped markings. There were the Télésopes, the Nautiles; the Petits Pavillons de Princes, and the Amiral des Indes Occidentales, with 'des Harpes, des Musiques, des Cornets, et des Olives, tirées des Indes Occidentales.'

Fired with these names, we remove once more to Venice, and, walking to the end of the Zattere, take up our station, at the corner of the Dogana di Mare, the Customs House, where, on her globe, the statue of Fortuna turns upon the four winds of the world. Such is the place, in symbol, where Neptune should strew the treasures of the deep at the feet of the Venetian Republic, the Serenissima. All Venice lies in front across the blue waters of the Canale di San Marco. We see San Giorgio Maggiore upon its stone island, St. Mark's, the Doge's Palace, the Campanile, the Winged Lion of St. Mark, and St. Theodore with his crocodile, both upon their columns; and the Library of Sansovino, all of white Istrian, with the statues and obelisks upon its parapet above the Doric and Ionic orders \*

\* The passage that follows, which we entitle 'The Shoal of Pearls' has been inspired, not by the work of Regenfuss alone, but by another book, as well, *Histoire Naturelle des plus rares curiosités de la mer des Indes*, or 'Poissons, Ecrevisses et Crabes, de diverses couleurs et Figures extraordinaires que l'on trouve autour des Îles Moluques, et sur les côtes des Terres Australes, peints d'après nature durant la Régence de Messieurs Van Oudshoorn, Van Hoorn, Van Riebeck, & Van Zwoll, successivement Gouverneurs Généraux des Indes orientales pour la Compagnie de Hollande. Ouvrage auquel on a employé près de trente ans, et qui contient un très grand nombre de Poissons les plus beaux et les plus rare de la mer des Indes.' 'A Amsterdam, donné au public par Louis Renard, Agent de Sa Majesté Britannique, 1746.' This book, with its total of one hundred hand coloured plates, in preparation, as the preface states, for nearly thirty years, is a precious relic of the Dutch Indies, and of the Residencies of Ternate and Amboyna, in the Spice Islands, at either end of the Moluccas. The first volume represents the collection made by Balthazar Coyett, Governor and Director of Banda and Amboyna, and president of the Commissaries at Batavia. He encouraged the search for these fishes, which were brought alive to his house by the Indians, and caused them to be drawn and painted. The second volume was formed from the collection of Mynheer van der Stell, then Governor of the Moluccas, who employed a painter Samuel Fallours, to depict them, from which series two hundred and fifty were selected for publication. The original drawings for both volumes would seem to have been presented by the editor, Louis Renard, to George III, and may still be preserved in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. We can only add that this book of Renard, together with that of Regenfuss, are incomparable in their beauty and inspiration to those who love these curious products, the shells and the 'poissons perroquets' of the tropic seas.

## *Different Sorts of Shells*

We would have a shoal of pearls banking and heaping up at foot of the stone wharf of the Dogana. We hear them ringing and crackling as the water sinks back through them. And, suddenly, it becomes a world in miniature, a capricious architecture of pavilions and pagodas, each with its inhabitant. Also, we hear the noise of horns and conches. The little nautilus with hoisted sail scuds upon the wind. Where the oar strokes is his ocean. Here are Conques de Vénus. It was on a shell like this that the naked goddess came to land. Her shell has pearly rills to it, and is pink like a pretty ear. It will bring her ashore close to a wood of orangetrees. The air is light, and heavy, from the waxy blossoms. In that Hesperides play Mercury and other young knights, without their armour, and the naked Graces.

Near to the Conques de Vénus lie the Nattes chinoises. They are of the lacquered Indies, sailing North into the Yellow Sea. The sails are of lateen, rigged like a pagoda, under rocky islands that are hieroglyphs or horses' heads. Or a barge with webbed wings gliding above the fields upon the long canal, while the Celestial smokes his pipe of opium and time, old time, has abdicated and there is no count of hours or days. Also, they are Chinese tresses, the pigtail and the oiled black curls, above a face and breath of jasmine. Another shell, the Feuille de Laurier, is like a simple laurel leaf blown from the sea garden in proof that there are myrtles and immortal groves. Near to them the Oreilles de Géants are shaped like ears of Cyclops or of Titans. The Casques Rouges are scarlet helmets of cinnabar thrown down by heroes. Couronnes d'Éthiopie, barbaric diadems worn with the lion skin headdress, tilt to one side or other and are helpless in the waves.

Past one, and another, the Manteau Polonois spreads its colours on the shore. The shells called Manteaux Royaux, shaped like a scallop, extend their rounded mantles that resemble the robes of Kings or Imperors in formal portraits. Their folds or creases are the straight rills through all their length, which are waved in semblance of the undulations of the ocean. They can be in many colours, coralline, red, or orange, scarlet, or black, like tails of ermine upon the white shoulders of the shell, or, most valuable of all, citron yellow, with little marks or dots of white; for we are to remember that these are Kings of the translucent deep, their state and pride are different from the kingdoms of

## *Amiral Orange*

green fields and golden cities. There are more sea-helms, besides the *Casques Rouges* from Nicobar, calling to mind tournaments in scaly armour to the winding of the conch for trumpet. *Langues d'or*, golden tongues, lap up the sands. We find spotted *Léopards* and *Lions Grimpants*, beasts of heraldry, in simile. The *Turban de Pharaon* is painted more elaborately within its china folds; *Draps d'or* and *Draps d'argent* shine through the shallow waters. These shells that form the marine architecture build their pavilions at the water's edge. The *Tour de Babel* is that tower, which was never finished, built to its highest pinnacle. With the alternating black squares and circles that are its ornament it is all galleries and windows, complete, in rules of architecture, even to the cornices and astragales of each diminishing storey. Or we find the *Véritables Escaliers à vis*, staircases of Blois or Chambord, the caprice of Kings or madmen. If the *Téléscopes* are in emblem for Admirals and sea-captains, the *Lavoir de Vénus* is the basin where naked Venus washed herself, shaking the spray from her golden hair and golden body.

*Oreilles de Midas*, asses' ears, prick up from the salt waters, Midas, who was given asses' ears because he preferred the pipe of Pan to Apollo's music. What do they hear now? Sea-music, and the breaking of the waves. We have *Cornets*, *des Harpes*, *des Musiques*, from the occidental Indies. *Cornets de Tritons* are blown by shaggy mouths. The *Argus bandé* puts out to sea. It is elaborate and fanciful, for the *Argo* had a bank of fifty oars. There are *Ailes de Chauve-Souris*, the moths of this world of waters, and *Têtes d'Araignées*, spider's or death's heads, all but the horned owl. *Couvertures de Lit* bring us back to the living and to humanity, for they are so beautifully striped and rayed. We see *Doubles Crêtes de Coq*, *Poires sèches*; *Fraises blanches et rouges*, *Dattes noires*; *Figues de mer*, *Flamboiantes jaunes et brunes*; while *Amiraux et Contre-Amiraux*, Admirals of the Red and Blue, hoist their colours and engage above the treacherous shoals. The *Amiral orangé* is the pleasure barge, Cleopatra's galleon, the painted skiff that plies to Cytherea. It was near those coasts that Venus climbed, naked, from the sea. Who will embark for her island and its shady groves?

The *Grand Amiral des Indes Orientales*, this is the shell of shells, as fanciful as a ship of crystal, but with the glint and shine

## *Delights of Ocean*

of porcelain, of marine build launched upon the waves, the heart or palladium of the whole Armada. Were it the Spanish main, this galleon would have on board the Patriarch of the Indies and be cathedral of the fleet. But the Grand Amiral is pagan; he is Neptune's Admiral, the captain of Poseidon's forces, flying the colours of the coral reef.

There were never these tints upon the rose's petals, even were they sails to waft you to Armida's bowers. No Caesar knew such purples, extracted from the shell; no such violets grow on Lethe's banks and bring oblivion, that have such hue. This is greener than the ilex shade; softer than the olive groves wherein the Ancients rested. It is white like a snow field, like the white clouds of the Muses when they race along the aether. White as the cloud of Ixion, which was the limbs and body of fair Juno, whence were born the race of Centaurs, white as the mares in the meadows of Magnesia. Blue as the skin of Amphitrite, daughter of Oceanus and bride of Neptune; blue because that is the colour for the salt spray to show, gilded, on her bosom and running down her limbs. Nymphs of the sea must be olive skinned, burnt apricot, or tawny, and we have them all in the pearlshell volutes. There is citron of the lemon wood, the myriad skins and figures of the Oceanides, nymphs of ocean, Tethys' daughters, the saffron field, the lilyed, those with lids of jasmine, the bruised and honeyed nectarine, gold freckled like the strawberry, cassia breathed, with fronds of gold, the creamy magnolia with mouth and throat of spice, the yellow or blue crocus as though lying in a starry field, the tulip, turban-shaped, with pointed sleeves of gold behind the flowering lattice, nets and meshes to hide shapes of ravishment, the naked pearl, that calls for no covering, and glistens in the summer moonlight, the smooth clove, the body of sweet sandalwood, a toy of coffee that can move its limbs and is brown as an eggshell, and as clean of shape, the skin of amber with honeyed shoulders and honey dropping hair, Dryads of the myrtle grove, ghosts who change, and change again, their shape for the youths who died of love, dark Gypsies of the rose-hung hedges, the cream upon the faunal raspberries, sharpness and sweetness as though from prickles of the raspberry canes, netted fruit upon red walls of autumn, green apple cheeks, a nude body with a skin of apple, the delights of Ocean, a nymph who holds the golden

## *Himalayan Vale*

reins and, chariotless, is drawn naked down the main; a moment on the lion sands and then the covering, the integument of Ocean, which lifts you up and carries you; the phosphorescent gleam; the shore of amber, or of ambergris; the shadow of the galleon, a tent or pavilion from which to swim out into the sun; the fronds and green hair of the Nereids; Panope in her cave of shells and shaded by the vine, Eupompe, the pleasure of the halcyons, who come to her, ruffling the waters, wide-eyed Arethusa upon the rocky promontory; daughters of blue-haired Nereus, all with glistening water on their naked limbs; pearl shell trumpets, pearl diadems, helms of red cinnabar; the arcana of the waters; such is the Grand Admiral of the Oriental Indies, the shell captain of all the seven seas.

But Tethys, also, had her sons. She was mother, by Oceanus, of the great rivers of the world, Peneus, flowing through the Vale of Tempe, on whose banks Daphne was changed into a laurel, Scamander, where the Trojan maidens came to bathe and offer their virginity to the rivergod, the waters of Scamander that make more beautiful the hair of those who bathe in them, so that Juno, Venus, and Minerva swam in that river before they climbed Mount Ida to obtain the golden apple. The goddesses stood before Paris without any covering or ornament, and the shepherd gave the golden fruit to Venus, and went to feed the white bulls of the mountain. Soon after, there came the Trojan wars when all the heroes flew to arms.

The Nile, the Ganges, roll their turgid waters. They are rivers, not of our sages. Indus, Brahmaputra, where the wise men paint themselves with ashes, where the dead float down to Ocean. It is the poet's Himalayan vale, a rocky valley in the Caucasus, one of the corridors that lead to Tartarus, signifying that this is near the Kingdom of the dead. The burning river Phlegethon flows not far away. This is India in its widest and most poetical interpretation. It is India, when no one knew where India was, so that it is the sacred land of pilgrimage, heightened into poetry, perceived or apprehended in the light of that, as with eyes that have their first sight of it, and are dazed and astonished. Its luminosity is something never seen before. This comes not from the sky, or as we may have seen it, from the ancient Ocean. For the firmament is cloudless, and Ocean but a name. But every particle of



## *Valley of the Halcyon*

the aether burns in incandescence. The whole air is burning, white hot. It will only sparkle, only glitter, where it can harden. Otherwise, it is a grey mist hiding nothing and, in truth, mistless. The snow mountains are unimaginable in their eminence, not of this world at all, but as though the background for immortal visions, clouds, or pedestals for what might show there for an instant, and be for ever gone

Below this, is a valley of the halcyon His flashing wings, his painted beak, linger at the flowers. For they blow here, even with their roots in snow It is a sacred park, a pleasure garden. The darker leaves are broader, more glossy than the laurel. They are wide and spatulate, and their bracts are weighed down with flowers, red, or white, or rose coloured, through every crimson, honey throated, mottled and speckled like the humble foxglove, with anthers that drop dew, not of much scent, but, of a sudden, as if spiced, embalming the air around them, not so much a perfume as a taste or savour Rhododendrons are the ilex, the myrtle, of the Himalaya Their leaves give the dark glitter, they are the sacred shade But their flowers are textured as though the light dwelt in them, inhabiting their cells They are gathered into the body of this Indian dawn, or noon, which shows its fires from among their leaves At night, the flames go out of them It might be moonlight, for their colour is as though borrowed or reflected in them They are ghostly fires, burnt out before the evening

Farther down the valley there will be magnolia trees, eighty feet high, with a thousand rose pink flowers, all open A barque, a sailless galleon, struck ashore with lotuses, only the petals are not pointed, they are rounded like shells, or like the full moon The scent of such a tree is something curded, but of heavenly or celestial milk, from the fields of paradise and, in the same breath, it is rinded, it is the skin or rind of some Hesperidean fruit, this being its own animal, its magnolia savour, breathed in again, again, with every breath The flower, or so its scent suggests, must be seeded like a melon, with seeds set close together, a bed, or couch of seeds That moon white curd has by some miracle come rose pink, its perfume is the citron grove, citron or lemon being feminine or lunar to the solar orange grove But this rose pink magnolia is, as well, a lotus tree.

Near to it, there will be white magnolias, trees as high as that,

### *Conspectus of the Americas*

which may be felled for timber, or for firewood. Such may be their fate, in commentary upon the hand of man. Their trees of flowers come into season, year after year, a little sooner or a little later, but always and ever with the snow upon their boughs, as though it were the ambrosia, the heavenly manna for their blossoming. And, in a few days, the great heat comes up from the plain.

The axe is put to the tree and strikes into its heart. Even that does not kill it. The trunk must be nearly severed before it sways and shivers, it begins to fall. Always unexpected, too soon, or when it seems too late. It topples and is uncertain, and now, nothing can help it, falling, hurling, thundering to earth. The flowers, in their hundreds, are dashed upon the ground. Some will roll and tumble for a little way, in the humiliation of bodies dropping from the air. Their petals bruise, and in a few hours they are brown and faded. But the tree, itself, is now a wreck or skeleton. Other flowers ride high up, upon the dying branches, still out of reach, but doomed. The whole tree is still a miracle, even in its catastrophe, but peculiar and inexplicable with its myriad candles burning, gigantic in cone and bulk, like a great tower tumbled, a temple and a lotus tank, a kingdom ruined. So can fall great cities.

We could tell, too, of the feathered waters, of Amazon and Orinoco. They are the other Indies, lands of the plumed cacique where the maize grows, but there are no golden cornfields, of the cactus and volcano, of the sugarcane, of warm waters for the turtle. They are the mirror Indies, the mocking echo, the mirage in the Ocean, ten thousand miles away. Let us look into that mirror! The Redskin is, beyond contradiction, the haunting of those lands. The Red Indian blood is in the soil. It is ineradicable. The probability is that the Indians had come, not more than fifteen hundred or two thousand years ago, from the region of the Pacific Ocean. It is considered likely that they arrived on that coast in their fleets of canoes, and that their origin had some affinity with the Malays or the Polynesians. But, having said this, we want to put an emphasis upon the Redskin, upon the coppery, red clay improbability of his colour. Such is, without the monuments, the Carnac or Stonehenge of the North Americans. But, instead of dating from the mists of antiquity, this ghostly past is but just removed from the present. It is no older than the mulberry tree in an old garden.

## *Conspectus of the Americas*

This is the extent of America—before the railway came. Think of its immensity, its overpowering size! There is Hudson's Bay, the Baltic of the tundras. It opens to frozen Baffin Land and to the vast North West. This was the land of furs, of bear and seal and ermine, of the blue fox and silver fox, degraded, now, to commerce. Also, it was the field of eiderdown. Here, the geese nested. Most rare of all, the Harlequin duck, like a harlequin from the Hoxton pantomime, showed his painted mask and waved his painted wings against the perennial snows. The Esquimaux hunted the walrus, or slew the musk oxen with their arrows tipped with fallen meteor's ore.

And to the South, in what were tropics to that waste of ice, the maple forests were woods on fire with naphtha, while the melting sugar made sweet stains upon their stems. Moose and caribou, like primitive ghosts who remembered the mammoth, roamed the woods and belled into the winds. The rivers teemed with salmon. It was a spate of silver fins and gleaming scales. And now, after cornfields, come the cotton lands, the quaking black Savannah, the mud flats of Mississippi. Here are black faces and white print gowns. These are the slave plantations, not isles of sugarcane, Demerara or Barbados, but labour in the cotton swamps, the picking of tobacco leaf, the heavy laden baskets on the head, the singing of the slave gangs.

Here lies the Gulf of Mexico, Mediterranean of those lands. On its bosom are the isles, lands of cocoa groves and sugarcanes. The sleepy Sargasso is in its midst, where the tides are turtle footed, where clutches of turtle eggs are found upon the sand. But, to the West, the rocky wastes rise up. It is a desert of burnt rocks, the Arizona of sharp cutting sands. This had great towns of Indians hewn into the hillsides, storey above storey, like a honeycomb, like a hive of wild bees. The dead still crouch there, desiccated by the desert airs, their knees drawn up, all knees and elbows, like locusts or caterpillars drying in the wind. It is the land for eagles. Below, lies Aztec India, the American India of obsidian and feathers, the El Dorado. The Redskins' eagle quills make the unit of their art. Mayan sculptures are little else than plumes in stone. The Maya were ugly men, short and squat, with thick legs. Their heads were apelike, or deformed, their intelligence, it may be, stopping short at mathematical calculations from

### *Humming Birds of the Crater*

the stars, for their interest lay in chronology, in the complication of time cycles that involved vastly greater periods of time than the span of their own actual history. Yet they are Red Indians: they are dressed in feathers. On the stone stelae the design is nearly lost in plumes.

And, now, the isthmus narrows. The winds from two oceans meet among the hills. There are parrot-bright waters, inland lakes where it has never snowed. And, yet, the snow volcanoes tower in the sky. They roll down their fires and their boiling mud into the paradise below. The fire mountains are all fire and ice, the snow upon the crater's edge looks down into the pit. It is a lunar landscape. Its circle is several miles round, with its hundred smoking vents, its piercing bitterness, its inner fire. Some vegetation, some stunted bushes, thrive out of the hot soil underneath the snows. Here and there, dart those humming birds that are only found within the crater's rim. In form and colour they are swallows, or martens, dipped in fire, but diminutive in size, their blue-green wings curved like a swallow's wing and their snow white breasts being in emblem of the perpetual snows. Two species of humming bird, very similar to each other, are peculiar to the craters of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi. Their prison, from which they never issue forth, is more compound of fire and ice than any purgatory. But the land below them, which they will never know, may be nearer to the earthly paradise than their prison is near to hell.

And, like paradise, it is beset with dangers. The great Antigua fell down in a day. This, in all probability the most beautiful of Spanish cities upon the American continent, with its one hundred churches and convents and its many palaces, was overwhelmed by earthquake, by fire from one volcano and boiling mud and water from another, in 1773. Antigua had a history of disaster and tragedy. But, in its intervals, an earthly paradise it must, indeed, be. The two volcanoes, called Agua and Fuego, both fifteen thousand feet in height, stand above the ruined city. A road leads between them through the orange groves. In the distance there is a huge plain, and the blue Pacific Ocean. Through the branches of the trees fly parrots and guacamayas, or great macaws. The boughs are hung with flowers, while lizards or iguanas, from an inch to three feet long, run across the road and

## *Acroceraunian Mountains*

climb into the branches Everywhere are orange groves, or coffee groves, for this is the land of coffee. Guatemala, it would seem, must be one of the loveliest countries upon earth. The plain on which the Spanish soldiers glittered in armour is shaded by the high volcanoes, and the spirit of romance rests upon it

This is at the end of one world and the beginning of another. Though what do we know of Nicaragua, Honduras, of Costa Rica, or San Salvador! Each must have its own traditions, its Spanish relics and its Indian lore. But the Indians are no longer Redskins—these are pcons who, for centuries, were slaves. For, now, the land which dwindled but would not end, swells again. After Panama comes Colombia, most Castilian of all New Spain. From here it is another continent, sister to Africa, and sharing with Africa the Southern hemisphere. Ecuador must have its wonders Peru has Cuzco of the Incas Bolivia, too, has magnificent old buildings It is as far inside its continent as Galicia or Bucovina, and with a civilization dating back to the sixteenth century Potosi was the greatest mine of silver in the world, and it is the mountain of Potosi that appears like a mysterious pyramid in the background of those seventeenth century tapestries that depict America among the four continents of the world. Potosi was, in fact, the synonym for wealth, and that forgotten name was embroidered in the imagination to some semblance with 'Les Indes Orientales et Occidentales', that book to which we have referred, before, as being the work of the Dutchman, Romeyne de Hooge Peru, also, was the land of silver, borne on the lama's back, the camel of the Incas But we draw rein, still farther to the South, among the untamed Araucanians, Chilean Indians, who were never conquered And the earth ends in Tierra del Fuego, in a land of winds and of perpetual cold Such was the new world. There is nothing comparable in the age in which we live

They are great rivers, Mississippi, Amazon, and Orinoco. But listen to this river-god who hides among the reeds His are waters of Tartary, of the Caucasian vales. And yet, we would have him nearer to the fountain of all legends, between the Ionian and Adriatic sea. His melted snows may be of Acroceraunian mountains, a name with far off thunder in it They are high mountains and they catch the thunder. The lonely goatherd

## *Loves of the Water Nymphs*

is hiding from the lightning. In his rough dialect he could tell you, by hearsay, of the wars, how Andromache, the widow of Hector, led by the hand her son Astyanax from the burning walls of Troy. She was tall and dark and thin, dressed darkly, of erect carriage, walking painfully, with long thin arms and hands. She went, her hand in his hand, or upon his curls, holding his head away that he might not see the flames. And once, it was said, she looked back, when a ghostly trumpet rang from the parapet; stood still for a moment, and walked on. Of how Aeneas left Troy at the head of his soldiers, carrying the treasures and the gods of Ilium: how they were wrecked in Libya; of the loves of Dido and Aeneas in the palace garden by the cooling sea; and in the cavern, lying on the robe of Helen, while it thundered, and they had lost the huntsmen, of how Aeneas sailed again for Italy.

Much else. Of the loves of the water nymphs, and how the shepherds lie with them. How nymphs of crocus, or of saffron locks, make the still pool into their mirror. Oh! there is time to waste! Of the slow unbinding of their hair, with lovely arms lifted, most beautiful of gestures, of the soft hour they will spend before their mirror, which has passed too quickly. Of their melodious curves and bendings, melodious because their every movement stays like music in the memory, and is a torment when forgotten. How they try their hair in new fashions for each other's admiration, twisting and braiding it, holding it at hand's length, or piling it in curls, with combs of amber or of tortoiseshell. Of how they paint their nails: or dress their hair with lilies. How, to these naked water nymphs, the chiton or the peplum makes them more naked still. They will spend the noon at it, dressing and undressing with the web upon their waists, and hiding nothing, and one will fold it for her headdress and, in her nudity, be as a nymph within the shepherd's cabin, by his sheepskin bed, who stands in his doorway at the early dawning. The morning, too, is fresh and virginal waking from the arms of night. Its airs are sweet scented, aromatic, as if the herbs were trampled, or someone, who had slept there, had risen from them, thyme, fennel, rosemary, upon the mountain side.

It is one of those valleys, opening like the curves of a trumpet and leading down into great and greater distances. The vale runs down from the grassy knoll on which we stand, down through a

## *The Lyric Moment*

plain of vineyards to the blue and distant sea. This is high up and in the chestnut woods. The goatherds and swineherds wander here, but the peasants only come here for feasting and for looking down upon the sea. It is the nymphs, therefore, who dance with clashing cymbals in a ring. Their circle is as a brake upon the steep declivity of the vale. It leads down through the spring morning, down, down, among the myrtles. The slope of it gathers speed as it falls, as it spreads out like the curves of a cornucopia and is heaped with the fruits and flowers of the spring. It is a tideless sea, and the litoral runs along the West. Who is there that has walked in this hour out on the margin of the sands! Here is the shell of Venus. Another shepherd saw her, or her nymph, on such a morning. But look back to the mountains! Listen! listen! It is thundering upon Acroceraunia. Not in the leafy woods, nor by the river pool. It is the soft hour when he comes out from the reeds. When every nymph, but one, has left her mirror, who lingers for him and pretends to flee, but lets herself be taken.

It is the lyric moment. That is why the rivergod speaks or sings to music. Sweet haycocks make amphibian beds for love, for this moment's mating of two elements. They climb up on the haycock and, afterwards, what do they see? Not strawberry beds: nor the espaliered orchard: not the clipped limetrees ringing scent down from their eaves. nor masked mezzetin and the strumming of the mandoline. nor his chequered suit, for it is hidden in the bosage. Not this, nor that. Ah! no. It is the age of innocence. Here is no artifice. Nature is still taming man. And yet! This is the rivergod of frescoes and of fountains. The theme is nature, made formal, and disposed for man.

That calls for a descending vale breaking down to the blue, or Mediterranean. There are high eminences crowned with palaces and a tideless sea. The sunlight breaks direct into this gulf. Indeed, the sun is a marine deity or omnipotence. Often he is throned upon the waves, on the blue lap of Amphitrite about to sink into the nether world, in glaucous sleep. A galleon is tied up to the quay. The complication of its web of rigging, the height of its wooden poop, rising to the balconies or to the terrace and to the orange tubs, casts down an insignificance upon the figures on the shore, who face the declining sun and, as its rays run out

## *Cry of the Gondoliers*

to them across the bay, dip their hands into the golden stream as though this was their wealth, to live in poverty below the walls of marble palaces. Isles of Procida and Ischia, the rock of Capri which Claude painted, as though it were his signature, in every sea, these islands lie behind the hills in another valley, to either hand. This is Claudian Italy.

Come away! Come away from Claude!

*'The swans whose pens as white as ivory  
Eclipsing fair Endymion's silver love,  
Floating like snow down by the banks of Po,  
Ne'er tuned their notes, like Leda once forlorn,  
With more despairing sorts of madrigals,  
Than I, whom wanton love bath with his gad  
Pricked to the court of deep and restless thoughts.'*

That is part of a madrigal by Roberto Greene, and upon the wings of that lovely music we float down to where we started from. The courts of deep and restless thoughts: what are they but the lists, or tournaments, of Sacred and Profane Love? Physical and metaphysical, Golden Age and Age of Gold, tilt for their honour. We have said so much about the world's sweet pageant, and are loth to go. Here, from the gondola, dark shadow, dark moth, of which Shelley said the chrysalis must be a coffin, we glide over to the Zattere. 'A-òell' cry the gondoliers: we are too late, in time, to hear them sing a strophe of Tasso. 'A-òell' 'A-òell' and we have come back to the quay.

### VIII

It is an entire noon upon the waters, and there is no other shade than the shadow of a hand. An August noon: but not the still hour of the ilex. Long hours ago, porphyry and serpentine slipped below the tide. The palaces trembled and sank into the sea. It is August, the Augustan month; you hear the sound of bees in that. It is the month of honey. But, here, no flowers grow. August means the dipping of the oar.

The heat of the lagoon is an imprisonment. You have your



## *Torcello and Burano*

thoughts: and there is nothing else to do. It is self-imprisonment. It is as though, lost in this immensity, a butterfly or honeybee came to the gondola, and the whole emptiness was lifted up and put upon them. There is no shade but your own shadow: not another sound: nothing but the heat. In this omnipotence, real becomes unreal. There are no boundaries, no horizons. Since all has no substance and is as a mirage, the impossible can be attempted and achieved. This poor world of fact can launch great chariots into the aether. Not yet. It is early for them. Their hour is the late afternoon. Now, at this moment, there is but the far-off tower in the midst of Venice, the Campanile, and other towers, on islands, in its copy. We must not listen for its bells across the water. There is more than one religion. Far, far away, there are blue mountains. Near at hand there is a miracle, for we see men walking on the waters. They are on the sandbanks, stooping low for mussels. We can hear their voices. The channels are marked out with stakes, or 'pali', as heavy as ships' timbers, tarred black, but dank with weeds. They are in great number, for as far as the eyes can see in every direction, and they have a poetical importance in this world of the lagoons. In value of their imagery they are as the stakes upon which lions were crucified in a long line upon the roads from Carthage. That episode is one of the immortal passages in Flaubert's novel, if novel it can be called. Here, they are stakes to keep something down that is buried under the waters. There are dead bodies buried at these crossroads. But not dead men or women. Nothing of more substance than shadows or reflections.

We are going to Torcello, though there is no need to mention it again. That is a name for golden mosaics and for mosaic pavements, a sister to Ravenna. Golden Byzance has sunk low into the marshes. A little creek leads up to it through the malarial island. The rest is vineyards, where they make a brackish wine, where the spade turns up broken bits of marble friezes, stone fragments, and copper coins gone green, but it would be tins and garbage outside a modern town, and there will never be vineyards to hide the age of industry.

We leave Torcello: neither do we linger at Burano, but pass along its stagnant waters. All is decrepitude and the green slime of decay. Its children are half-starved and malarious: a town of

## *A Morning of Carpaccio*

stunted growth and mangy dogs Their food, for the fishermen are eating it upon the quayside, is polenta, a mess of Indian corn or maize, with livid green sea worms moving in it, or a diminutive and evil sort of crab, the spider of those rotting wharves. We would not remember Burano were it not for Baldassare Galuppi, who was known as Buranello, one of the most beautiful and least known of eighteenth century composers. The memory of his sad and haunting melody, though we have heard but a single piece of his upon the harpsichord, redeems the filth and squalor of that gangrened town How can he have come from here? In what dark and pestilential courtyards did he play as a child? Or did he pass his days upon the fishing boats? For music may have come to him, not from the town, but from the lagoons

Far out, once more, upon their heat and silence, we can rehearse our predilection We have only come here to build up, and destroy, these fancies For the moment it is a solitude. Before we people it with persons, this idle hour can be assembled into architecture There was a time, in our imagination, when Venice meant the paintings of Carpaccio.

So let it be a morning of Carpaccio! One of those mornings that fill the mind with sails! The popinjay quay is alive and thronging It is built of marbles that are young and bright coloured as the morning. They come up, shining, out of the still waters of the harbour, and, wherever there is a crack or crevice between the stones, flowers have taken root and are growing It is chiefly, the dianthus, the pink, like a little ragged flag, a little fluttering pennon of frayed edges. They nod and tremble above the stones, like little banners on a breeze

This life of their's, so close to the marble and so near above the salt of the sea, is a comment upon the life and bustle of the harbour For every foot of the quay is trodden there are as many people as if a fleet were setting sail And they are as brightly coloured as the marbles. No two of them are dressed alike. In their desire to be different, the popinjays have even alternated the stripes and flames upon their arms and legs The tongues of light or dark would fit into one another as the flanges on a cogwheel. The patterns of the marbles are not more variegated. It is not only a patterning of bars. There is every conceivable spotting and

## *A Sea Architecture*

diapering, as well. The colours are shaded or mottled: they are stippled in a myriad tiny dots: they shake like a curled fringe: or imitate the squares and lozenges of a chessboard.

As for their heads, every one of these fine blades or popinjays has a mane of fair hair reaching down to his shoulders and his locks are crowned by a little rakish cap, put jauntily on one side of his head. The cap has nearly always a feather jutting out of it, so that the whole mass of young men, taken together, give the effect of a pheasantry. The cockscomb attitudes in which they stand, in pride of their plumage, lend an even stranger air of improbability to their movements. For the whole length of the quays is peopled by them. They have come out in their hundreds, in all finery, to watch the embarkation.

This is so near to their houses that it might almost be at their windows. These have no panes of glass, no mirrors to reflect the ships, but the wooden shutters are thrown wide open and the sunlight is so fierce upon the walls that the empty spaces of the windows are mere dark and empty blanks. It is as though nothing lay behind them. They are blind eyes in this city of façades. For all the palaces have fronts of coloured marble, and there is not a house that is not a palace. It is the most fanciful of architectures, built according to the inventions of the sea, with the whorls and flutings of the seashells. In effect, it is as fresh and coloured as those live dwellings left by the morning tide upon the sands, with horned inhabitants who creep back, at a footfall, into their shells and must mourn their covering of water. These palaces, then, have sprung up in a night upon the marble quays. They have balconies and domes that reach up into the pleasant breezes to the height of the flapping sail, and above it. And these balconies are thronged with spectators who stand still in their excitement, or are leaning on the rugs and tapestries that are draped upon the balustrades. Sometimes, at the corner of a balcony, there is an orangetree in a terracotta tub, like a little tree strung with lanterns. There are, even, faces peering out between the leaves, half-hidden by the fruit. One or two brave spirits have climbed out upon the lead of the domes, and they cling perilously to each other as though about to slip from the earth's circumference, for it seems to revolve beneath them, following the curves of the cupola on which they are sprawling

## *Into the Whale's Belly*

The fleet lies at anchor just below them. It is moored to the marble quays, and the masts are as tall as the houses. The sailors, high aloft, can see into the rooms and shout questions to the men upon the balconies. They are often hidden by a sudden belling of the canvas, for the sails haul up slowly upon the masts. It seems as gradual a process as the green of spring coming upon the trees. Down below, the wooden gangways lead directly from the quays into the innermost belly of each ship. They are like the draw-bridges that cross the moat and plunge into the blackness of the barbican. The ship's side has been opened for their entrance, and thus, in its improbability, is as though a huge whale has been towed to the landing-stage and a hole cut into its bloated and distended body. For the height of the ship, as if lifts and falls upon the swell, is altogether monstrous and disproportionate. It is as high, or higher, than its own length.

The whole fleet is identically the same in these particulars, but with no two details of construction alike. Wherever there is opportunity there is an infinity of difference as though the prime difficulty lay in building any two boats alike. Within the common canons of construction they show every dissimilarity that could be worked into their design. And they are as elaborately fanciful as any castle giving on to a cliff of trees, or low down above a mere of waters.

It is, first of all, a question of these very masts. They are shaped as a tilting lance for a tournament, and are flying a superfluity of banners. They sport little wooden galleries, as high up the mast as that will bear them, and these are shielded, shoulder high, from the flight of arrows. The men, who make use of them, must stay aloft through the battle and not venture out upon the ladders. But they can control the fight and pour down boiling oil and lead upon the enemy's decks, if any ship is bold enough to come alongside and grapple with them.

The poop and stem of each vessel are built up, gallery by gallery, out of the sea, in diminishing decks, until there is no room for another, while their whole height of several floors above the waters is ornamented with all the devices of carving and gilding. As each ship floats idly at the quay there is time to see this and to watch the reflection of all their splendour in the pool. Nor is it any ordinary shadow, thrown sideways along the water, but the

## *Musicians of the Orient*

reflection fits, keel to keel. Where there is a vessel seen directly below its bows, the echo of it goes headlong down into the depths, sheer down like the leadline, and the topmost decks of it come back into a mysterious reality, as if they have pierced the water film and emerged again into the clear air high above that marble quay

In case there is not already enough animation, enough fluttering of pennons, three great masts spring up high into the air from sockets of bronze and marble. The masts are painted a military scarlet, and fly the three flags of the *Serenissima*. It is in perpetual reminder of their sea dominion; for, even when there are no ships tied up to the wall, there is ever the drumming of ropes and the flaunting of banners. But this, and this alone, gives the reality of history to the scene, for, in all else, it belongs to a world of fantasy that is created down to its smallest details out of the imagination. The sequence follows back easily from truth into fiction, even at a corner of one of the flags. For it touches against a balcony of musicians and, following its blown edges, we come to a terrace of hills set out with vines, and to a town of cupolas and domes built at altogether too improbable an elevation upon the mountains. But, nevertheless, it is true, and the reality of this strange world is proved in the band of music.

They are playing on a wide platform, put up especially for the occasion, and constructed of wooden timbers. The musicians are come out of the Orient in their brocaded dresses and the shaggy hats, as of rough wool or untrimmed fur, that they are wearing. Their instruments of percussion are cymbal and kettledrum, but the din made by these is as nothing to the blaring of the trumpets, blown with full force, like salvoes, to the crowd beneath. They are made in many different shapes: serpentine, wrapping round the body, for deeper rumbling of sound; straight, but swelling into shell-like fulness at the mouth, for roaring loudness; or thin and long, with slides and pistons, for changes of the voice and for a shriller tone. Playing in their intervals are all the lutes: some, like a halved gourd or melon: some for the touch of tapering hands, and shaped for that.

It is one of those mornings that fill the mind with sails! One of those mornings when a journey should begin! A morning of *Carpaccio*! We first saw it in the sky. This is flying every inch and

## *Parables of Dead Bones*

rag of bunting. They have crowded on sail and are making best use of the favouring winds. But the play of the winds is at different levels, and the clouds can be seen tacking from terrace to terrace, or drawn up by heat of the sun into an anchorage where they have lost the power of motion and slowly dissolve among his rays. Soon there will not be a cloud in the sky: in the meantime, the morning is young and its bright colours tint the great galleons.

As for the embarkation, it is almost of little moment compared to the excitement of all its details. It is the start of a journey: and so long as the person concerned is a princess, or a person of some distant importance, there is more to be gained from looking, either at the ships which are the vehicles of this departure, or at the crowd who are its impassive spectators, not either helping or hindering, but making a commentary upon the morning and its atmosphere in the liveliness of their attitude and the brightness of their clothes.

Such, in effect, might be a morning of Carpaccio, as called into the imagination from far away, many years ago, when floating upon the lagoons. Its inspiration could be the paintings of this master in Venice. There are other pictures by him which are parables of dead bones. But in those, indeed, it is a different Carpaccio: the contrast of virginity with the grinning skull, with the chattering of bones, this is his other drama, and its burnt and ascetic colours, as of the desert of nitrates, the Nitria of the anchorites, gives to this painter a deadly seriousness that his fairy tale fantasies and embellishments might, otherwise, belie. He was Dalmatian in origin and, probably, of Slavonic blood. It will be remembered that the Scuola San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, for whom he painted his sequence of little pictures in 1500-10, was founded by a Dalmatian or Slavonic brotherhood for the succour of poor Dalmatian sailors or others of their race. In his paintings at the Scuola San Giorgio, more than in the Legend of St Ursula at the Accademia, there are Oriental figures in dresses of Cairo or Istanbul. This feature, in Carpaccio and in Gentile Bellini, has never been studied with the care that it deserves. Such dresses were not the invention of the painter. They fall into different types or categories which an expert eye could recognize as being Turkish, Persian, or Egyptian. We may find in them every kind of Oriental costume, except the Moor and the Moghul. Among

## *The Round Caps of Traù*

them, too, are many Jewish merchants. The Seljuk and the Ottoman are differentiated by the forms of their turbans. And other figures wear hats or caps of Eastern pattern which derive from Byzantium. It is the Oriental personages in his paintings that give the peculiar flavour to the pictures in San Giorgio degli Schiavoni. The ships of Carpaccio, and his popinjays, are another side of his delightful genius.

When we wrote, of our morning of Carpaccio, that it was called into the imagination from far away, many years ago, when floating upon the lagoons, we intended by that to stress the force with which the vision of Dalmatia hung, in those days, like a mirage before the eyes. There used to be a steamship, the *San Marco*, that sailed, once a week, for Dalmatia and was moored near to the Doge's Palace. Our longing was to see the isles and dominions of Venice. A contributory sensation was the discovery, at that time, of Cipro, in a wineshop of the Salizzada San Moisè. This was no less than wine of Cyprus, the famous *Commanderia*. The poetic rarity made it an intoxication. Some years later, when Dalmatia could be touched and seen, it was Traù, more than any other town, that was reminiscent of Carpaccio. The high arched, or instepped bridge over the Canal di Traù had a reflection that fitted exactly so as to make, with its parent, the form of a stone hoop or circle. Above this bridge, seen from the deck of our own vessel, a sailing ship floated in mid-air, far down the widening waters. It was an image, precisely, from one of the series of the Legend of St Ursula. It could well be Traù, and no other, that is the city in the background. And, landing at the quay, the shops of the little town displayed those round, black hats of felt that are the caps of the popinjays in Carpaccio's paintings, the local costume of Dalmatia before you come down to Ragusa and dating, in all certainty, from before Carpaccio's time. In this manner was a poetical prophecy fulfilled. Alas! that the possibility has fled from other places. All one winter, as we have written, that Orient of silks and turbans would be approached by the *caïque*, through winds of almond and of oleander. But now, when we come back to it, our mood is for the living world of men and women. In this solitude, this imprisonment of heat, such things are visions, like the dreams of the hermit or the prisoner. They can be more real than the truth, itself.

## *Vision of the Bucintoro*

It is August again, the high firmament of heat. The slow passage of the gondola leaves a wake behind it that is exaggerated in length and in duration. It could, almost, be permanent. There is an unusual stillness in the air and in the water. In fact, the water is milky, but leaden in colour, and gleaming in its particles. Not a breath of wind: and yet, high up, the torn, leaden clouds are hurrying. In some directions it has suddenly grown dark. There, the distant waters are black, as though with gall poured into them. A white building far away, in midst of this, appears to be sieged or beleaguered in its waters. It is the ghostly moment, the hour of illusion or hallucination. Nothing has happened, yet. But some dire fate impends. The storm is coming.

And, suddenly, passing slowly round the corner of an island into the open channel, something immense and moving, in midst of a great concourse, is near at hand. For a moment, it is as though an abbey or cathedral with all the houses at its foot were on the march. But it is a golden galley or galleasse; the gold strikes, even, from its oars. The impression is of gold and crimson. It comes forward, slowly, for it has no sails, walking with its banks of oars, twenty-six to either side, that dip scarlet, and flash back with gold. It walks, or crawls, upon the waters. But, as well, it is drawn along with ropes by boats with many rowers. This gives to it the appearance of a huge pavilion or tent that is pulled by its tie ropes, as if the Khan of the Golden Horde were on the march, along the steppe. At its poop, flies the flag or pavilion of St. Mark, a crimson ground, with the golden lion upon it. The prow of the galley is a gigantic, golden fish's head, supporting the ombrello, or Doge's parasol, and the eight standards of the Republic. Its whole deck is a huge saloon or gallery, gilded from end to end, and hung with mirrors. This is garnished with cut velvets, like the interior of a state coach, and has, on the outside, carved emblems of the virtues and the seasons. At one end of this gallery is the Doge's seat, in form of a golden throne, and the seats of the Venetian Senators.

It is the *Bucintoro*, at the Porto di Lido, coming back from the symbolic wedding of the Doge and the Adriatic Sea. When his vessel was at the end of the lagoon, at the place where the open sea begins, the Doge will have risen from his throne, the back of which had been taken out, for that moment, disclosing a gilded balustrade behind him, and he will have thrown the ring into



## *Masks upon the Waters*

the sea, with the words: 'Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuque domini.' Such had been his words, on every Ascension Day, from the time of Doge Pietro Orseolo II (991-1008), until Napoleon took Venice and the French troops burnt the *Bucintoro*. That which we see, the last built in the Arsenal, came from the slips in 1728 and should have lasted for a hundred years. The *Bucintoro* was a galley of a hundred feet, or more, in length, and intended only for parade and show. It was commanded by an Admiral. This officer had the power to postpone the festa if the weather was dangerous, for, being all gilding and decoration, the vessel was not strong enough to resist the violence of the waves. Its navigation was in the hands of a pilot, who, by tradition, must answer with his head for the safe return of the Seignior to Venice. Aboard the *Bucintoro* were the Doge's personal escort of footmen, or huiers, dressed in robes and soutanes of purple damask; the nine flags of the town, the four secretaries of the Senate, the two chancellors of the Doge, all in violet coloured robes, the grand chancellor, six counsellors, the ambassadors of foreign powers; the three Capi di quarantie, the censors, the avogadors, the capi di consiglio di dieci, and the sixty Senators, dressed in silken robes of flame colour, all wearing long perruques. In addition, the crew and the rowers at the oars, perhaps, in all, two hundred persons. The *Bucintoro* was brought out from the Arsenal on the eve of Ascension Day and dropped anchor before the Doge's Palace in readiness for this ceremony, it will return to the Arsenal eight or ten days afterwards.

We are near enough, now, to hear the splashing of the oars. All the gondolas of the town follow the *Bucintoro*, as well as the peot-toni, boats of ceremony which are used in the regatta, hung with silks and damasks, and much gilded. In the prow of each peotta is a man with a cor-de-chasse, which he sounds at intervals, while the others answer him, giving to this slow progress the air of a maritime triumph. Everyone in these boats is masked, even the rowers, who wear livery. The ordinary dress is the black silk mantello, but look closely at their heads! Each man or woman has a black face covering. It is the bauta, of black silk or gauze, worn round the head, and covering the chin and all the lower jaw, over this they wear the white mask, or volto, which does not hide the mouth, and which is kept in place by the hat. These hats they

## *The Water Stairs*

wear low down, upon the eye slits of their masks. Their disguise is like a race of bird men, and thus makes more real and more improbable, the triumph

But the gondolas are falling back. They run for shelter to the Iido. Against the livid sky, we see the *Bucintoro* race in order to pass the point of land and lie in the lagoon. The Doge flees from the Adriatic whom he wedded. He is drawn away from her in his nuptial coach, pulled by the long reins of his coursers, while the oars of his own galley, moving in their precision, are trabants or heyducks marching at his side. It is like a wonderful vision to see this gilded galleass go, trembling, in its gold. Would it be more startling, if we did not know she was the *Bucintoro*? All show and pomp, the gilded chariot of the waves. In the black and furious sky, her gilt is that of golden leaves or shells. It is implicit in her. It is her skin, her substance. She could dye the lagoon golden: a golden shadow, a golden darkness lying in the water. But it is a gilded castle: it has parapets and balustrades: there is an army in crimson on its battlements. It is a sea palace: the Grand Admiral, and the generals of the sea inhabit it. And once more, it is a pleasure barge: it has no sails, and is drawn along by labour. Seen above the sandy island, it is a golden hulk, some relic of Poseidon's realm, crowded with senators and counsellors of his Kingdom, with his regent or viceroy aboard, coming back from that ancient and watery dominion. It comes right past us, without seeing us. This is not of the ghosts who look you in the eyes. They are running for safety. Their time is not our time. It moves as slowly as a huge tent drawn by horses. How curious those persons in brocades and gold, with heavy wigs, or mitres, come in upon this vessel from the open sea! But the *Bucintoro* passes us, throwing out gold upon the surges.

They will disembark from a golden landing stage at the Piazzetta, before the Doge's Palace. Then, the Procurators of the Republic in their robes of velvet, as we know them from Venetian portraits, with the golden stole upon their shoulders, will go by gondola to their palaces. All over the town, Procurators and Senators go down the narrow canals, and pass up the green and slippery water stairs into their houses. In the evening they will come forth again for the carnival. After a few days the *Bucintoro* will be towed back once more into the Arsenal. There, with the other galleys of

## *Carnevale di Venezia*

the Republic, building or repairing, for the main fleet of thirty galleys is in the Adriatic, it is guarded, day and night, by sentries upon towers, who call out at every hour. In the words of De La Lande: 'Les Vénétiens regardent cet Arsenal comme le boulevard, non-seulement de Vénise, mais de l'Italie, et même de l'Europe toute entière contre les Turcs; il forme comme une île séparée, environnée de hautes murailles et de plusieurs tours, qui sont gardées avec soin.' Once, in the great days, sixteen thousand men and women were employed here, on shipbuilding, in the cannon foundries, and at rope or sail making. In these latter, known in dialect as la Tana, only girls and women were employed and, for the character of its inhabitants and their reputation, this was as the tobacco factory of Seville. The art of casting cannon, an hereditary profession, was in the hands, largely, of the Alberghetti family. Their metal was the Brescian steel. Great and solemn feasts were given here, as it was the might and pride of the Republic. We would have seen the banquet offered to Henri III, on his return from Cracow to be King of France, and the later festivals for the Comte du Nord, Paul I, son of the Empress Catherine, who spent seven hours in the Arsenal of Venice. We would have seen the twenty-four galleys always building here, besides the three peottoni, gilded as usual, in which the Doge and his court went to the Venetian churches.\* We would be taken round by high authority. 'L'Amiral conduit lui-même dans l'Arsenal les étrangers de distinction. On a coutume d'y manger des huîtres, qui sont très larges et très bonnes.'

### IX

But the Carnevale di Venezia! And we hear that florid and full-shaped little tune, once the favourite of the musical box. It is all runs and roulades. It plays itself like the statement of the theme before the variations. Then comes the counter theme, all watch springs and the fine teeth of the comb. After which the tune re-

\* As an example, in these peottoni the Doge and the Senators crossed the water, every third Sunday in July, in order to visit the church of Il Redentore, upon the Giudecca, and, every first of May, the Doge and Senate paid a visit to the convent of the Vergini, near to the Arsenal.

## *Carnevale di Venezia*

turns, played very slow, and exploring all its possibilities. It divides into two halves, the contralto and the treble, flying from one to other, and finishing with a long trill. Then the seesaw counter theme returns with descending runs like corkscrews, and whorls and convolutions which remind us of wood shavings that tremble in themselves, and come to ground. Ending with the tune again, at breathless speed, but flawless, in the simplicity of one of those mechanical nightingales when the lid of the box springs open and the little bird, all golden, and dyed with the plumes of humming birds, goes through its song, moving from side to side and fluttering its wings, and, long before its magic is done, has gone into its golden box, and the lid has closed. Again and again you would listen to the golden nightingale, and it never yields its secret. This has its neatness and precision. But it belongs to a world of sunlight, of bare arms and shawls, high combs and southern voices of the siesta and the morning. It is the voice that wakens you as it flings open the shutters a few feet away, and that is heard all day and long past midnight. It is popular music, the voice of the common people, trite and vulgar, as artificial as a paper rose. Yet it is haunting, and it is sweet upon the ears, the tune, to perfection, for a musical box. As much in miniature as Papageno's music, and more human.

'La Bionda in Gondolotta' is the name of this old song. It has had Sir Julius Benedict given to it for composer, though all that friend of Weber did to it was to form the variations in the fashion of that day. More often, it is ascribed to Paganini. In reality, it is a Venetian popular song of the Napoleonic period upon which Paganini composed a set of twenty variations. Benedict, who had often heard Paganini, tried to imitate his effects and the Carnival de Venise was often interpolated by the prima donna into the letter scene in *Il Barbiere*. It is one of those airs, like *Die liebe Augustine* or *Alabief's Nightingale*, as simple as a nursery catch, and known to everyone by instinct. Each of those tunes, however little, however futile, is the complete achievement of what it sets out to suggest. The one, a hurdygurdy waltz under the linden trees; the other, Russian in every turn of phrase. Not even Glinka is more Russian. As for the *Carnevale di Venezia* it is, utterly and completely, the popular Italian, however hybrid its treatment at a non-Aryan German's hands, who lived in Manchester Square.

## *Lord Byron and Paganini*

Listen to it again! and you will know it is not Neapolitan. It is a tune of Northern Italy, and we hear in its embellishments the echo of Paganini's violin. This is Venice in the time of Lord Byron, when he lived there in debauchery, before he went to Greece. The Venetians were, then, indeed, in the failure of their genius, but 'singing or dancing slaves'. Their talents survived only upon the boards of the opera house. The Austrian ruled the land, and the galleon or the felucca no longer held the seas. This decadence was inhabited and expressed, we might say, in the debaucheries of Lord Byron. His mornings, of which we may read in Shelley's 'Julian and Maddalo', when the two poets galloped their horses on the long sands of the Lido, faded into nights of sordid intrigue. Teresa, the wife of a pastrycook, or the daughters or mistresses of the gondoliers were his bed companions, lulling his genius with their wiles. Perhaps the true picture of Byron in Venice, which could never be written, would make the fullest history of dissipation that is left to us. Its theme is the romantic hero feeding upon the last fruits of the classic or renaissance world. During this time of decadence Byron was working upon 'Childe Harold', and upon lesser poems, 'The Corsair', 'Parisina', 'Bianca and Faliero', and their like. It was, in fact, a period of shame and obscurity in his life, representing the penultimate or rococo phase of his muse, and interesting to us because of many things, now forgotten, but beginning to emerge again, as to some of them, from oblivion. We mean, more with regard to his life and its details, than to his poems. It is always the picture of him that is important, more than the projects of his pen.

We may be certain that this tune was known to Byron. He had a memory for music. In one of his letters from Italy, written 1821, he says 'They are playing a waltz which I have heard ten thousand times at the balls in London between 1812 and 1815. Music is a strange thing.' In just such a way he will have heard the tune that is known to us as the Carnevale di Venezia. It would come to him, at all hours of the day and night, from one of the courts behind the Palazzo Mocenigo. And among the lantorns and mandolines on the night of the Regatta. It is so suited to the Southern voice. Could he hear it, again and now, he might wonder, like so many others, what was this familiar thing. Into the diabolism of his variations upon this simple flower, this child of

## *Lord Byron and Paganini*

music, Paganini, we might think, would be content, if there were some reference to this old association. The amours of Teresa and Lord Byron find their parallel in this evil spirit and his plaything. For Paganini, his peculiar genius and the weirdness of his personality, have seized upon this wench or strumpet of the common people. Its innocence is that of a child portrayed or acted by a grown up woman. We could be sure of that with Paganini and his violin, and can even hear it when a prima donna interpolates the song. And yet it has simplicity. It is but a tune from an old musical box, among the cavatinas from dead and forgotten operas, next, perhaps, to the Ranz des Vaches. After it, may come 'Non piu andrai' from *Figaro*. This is only an enchantment of another kind. Forget all else. It is a hot day, once upon a time, and all time, in the South. That simplicity, which we thought was guile, is really innocence. You can hear it in Rosina's songs in *Il Barbiere*. Her lovely air, 'Una voce poco fa' is no different. This is natural music, music of the street and court. It is what is sung at the window when the shutters are thrown back. It is the summer morning. But it is not romantic like the serenade.

Listen, for the last time, to the Carnevale di Venezia! It is like opening a little box. The tune is meant for singing. It is no larger than a breath. The effect is as though you held a flower to your face and breathed it in. Can a rose be a little box? This is not a rose of coral or of ivory. But the tune is as fresh and silly as a rose, not a rose of breeding, but one from the market stall, still dabbled with water, from the public fountain, a rose that is virginal, or not, but is drenched and penetrated with the scent of roses. This is the tune. It is like opening a little box, or remembering a little secret. We must think that, to the ear of Paganini, it was fresher and sillier than it could be now. It is so curious, the consorting of that freshness with this cadaverous spectre, a sight like a moth or a beetle on a rose petal. It is, of course, of perfect shape for virtuosity, as much an expression of the people as the loveliest of their daughters. You can hear it sung at the window, played by that evil genius, or tinkled so softly that you only hear it when held close to your ear. We must give to it, therefore, the qualities of proportion. There are secrets to this silly, or even ridiculous, little tune. And it is haunted by the ghost of Paganini. It is not the tune, only, that is hidden in the box.

## *Storm of Thunder*

They are things we carry with us, in ourselves, or in our hearts. You can hear Mozart or Paganini in the space of a pomander. We have had the whole of ocean in a painted sea shell. We saw an armada imperilled, in the *Bucintoro*, as it fled from the lagoon. There is so much, and so little, in imagination. Still, there is no sound. Nothing has happened, yet. The *Bucintoro* is but a golden light, a far-off burning, at low distance, as if above the waters. That white building upon an island is as though petrified in inky blackness. Dip your hand into the lagoon and feel how warm it is, hot, but with a chill in it that strikes the wrist. It will be cold when the storm has done. Already it is cooler. Maybe the thunder will pass by. But that breath of air is but the wind before the storm. Here comes the wind. It passes over us, ruffling the wide waters. And again it is still. In what quarter will the lightning strike? The clouds are like torn hair, torn rags, the torn ends of winding sheets. The air is livid, leaden, black with gall and thunder. A livid moment more.

### X

And, suddenly, the white hot lightning hurls into the world, the wild beast, the elemental tiger. Its leaping is a dance, the dance of the cobra or the rattlesnake. It terrifies and exults, even as it strikes. Immediately, the thunder booms and rattles. Beginning under earth, as if leaping in the rocky halls and in the lakes of fire, then ringing, as if the golden bowl, the metal of the earth was its plaything. This, again, again, as though for an eternity, and then playing and leaping in the firmament, rattling, rattling, like artillery, and dying down. At once, the lightning strikes again. The sky is on fire with it, blowing and shuddering like a sheet of white hot metal. And the thunder shakes and trembles. This is the obstinate sort that plays in one spot, as though caught there; and then booms right overhead, and passes. After it, an appalling crack, the hurling of a thunderbolt, the whole world seized and shaken, but hit in one place, as if metal struck metal, the lash of it heard as it springs and strikes. The whole lagoon runs with fire, in one quarter and then another. It flinches, and leaps into incandescence.

### *Madonna dell' Orto*

to the zenith; low down, like signalling, or like the signs of terror. And the peal of thunder breaks in the high emptiness and booms along the sky. We hear it under earth; in the heavens; upon these waters; and among the roofs and steeples of the town. For we would see the lightning from the Piazza of St. Mark, where its flashes almost play within the area of the buildings. It is a sky of Tintoretto, like that in his Finding of the Body of St. Mark. Because of the storm there is not a person in the square, but its porticoes and colonnades are the identity, the formal writing of the scene.

This storm came on again after midnight, and lasted until morning. The whole town was its arena. You could lie awake and listen to it, thinking that peal was in the quarter of the Frari, in the red brick Venice, or another, across the city, by Santi Giovanni and Paolo. The whole of Venice lies between them, with its old factions of the 'Nicolotti', and the 'Castellani'. The two churches we named were as the capitals of different states. It takes an hour, or three quarters of an hour, to go on foot between them. Another peal must be near by, above the Salute; or between it and San Giorgio Maggiore, upon the open water. To lie awake here, listening, while no one else could be asleep, brings the bricks and stones of the city into a living reality with the present. All, who could have heard that thunder, are awake upon this night. There comes a lull, made loud with rain, and a booming down by the Giudecca, in Palladian Venice, near to the Redentore. What can be happening in that other kingdom at the far side of the town? It must be raining and thundering at the Madonna dell' Orto. The huge paintings by Tintoretto are dark, themselves, with storms. Nowhere else, but with him, is there invention upon this scale. His Worshipping of the Golden Calf is incredible in conception and in the way his speed keeps pace with inspiration. It is a chore-graphic festival, a whole nation dancing and in tumult in the golden plains. The figures are in apotheosis, drunk with magic and the unreal light. In the same church there is an altarpiece by Cima da Conegliano, with his hill and his native town in the background, exquisite in detail, with little finches and orioles, many single flowers and the wild strawberry plant. Here and now, it could be read in flashes. And, then, the booming, rattling artillery removes. It bursts, near at hand, and could be close to the leaden domes of another church, San Giovanni in Bragora, where is a



### *Scuola di San Rocco*

Baptism by Cima da Conegliano, the most beautiful of all his paintings. From San Giovanni in Bragora to the Madonna dell'Orto would be a journey of two hours on foot. In another direction we would watch the lightning from the bridge of the Rialto. Here Shylock crossed, the open booths are shops of Fez or Istanbul. Who has not passed beneath the arch of the Rialto? The whole town booms and rattles. It has so many dark courts, and black stairways rising from the water, always mysterious, and more so in this night of lightning.

But, most wonderful of all, would be to see the Scuola di San Rocco. Here, in its two halls, the upper and the lower, are more than fifty paintings from the hand of Tintoretto. They are sea-halls with sea-pavements. The pictures in the lower hall are painted in a stormy manner, as with a brush of phosphorus. In the subject of the Circumcision, the high priest in his pointed mitre is a magician King. It was painted for a dark corner and is obscure, purposely, so as to give drama to his crimson robes. And there are panels of landscape with golden palms and lights of phosphorus in the sky and in the clouds. The sea-staircase leads up to the second hall, and it gives the sensation of coming up from the depths into the glaucous half-light, under the green waves.

It is a vast hall, more noble than any in the Palace of the Doges, more authentic because it stands here, undisturbed, in the centre of Venice, by a corner of the Frari, more convincing because it is still in use, having the canopies and lanterns of the confraternity, used for their processions, displayed around the walls. Even the huge lanterns are of marine construction, taken, we might think, from a town of sampans, one of the floating cities of the Orient, a town of junks and barges. In this upper hall, Tintoretto has painted in more detail because the light is stronger. And, in a smaller room, there is his painting of the Crucifixion, in which the dramatic strength is that of Rembrandt. The white-robed figure of Christ pivots the whole, whirling composition that, yet, is more balanced and considered than any other of Tintoretto's pictures. But it is the paintings, in their environment of the Scuola di San Rocco, more than it is the canvases alone and in themselves, that give the exceptional character to this pair of great sea-halls. Nothing else in Venice is so Venetian. The Palace of the Doges has its allegories and its battles of the 'terra firma', the paintings in

## *Architecture of Longhena*

San Rocco are of sacred history, but they seem imbued with the sea. It could be the interior of a great gilded galleon. And the wonderful exterior façade of the Scuola, with its early Renaissance pilasters, and its inlay of porphyry and of serpentine, does not diminish or deny this fanciful interpretation. We hear, in imagination, the storm of rain pelting and jangling upon that part of Venice Rain, which makes all living beings run for shelter, brings them together and imprisons them. Past and present come together in that hour.

How wonderful the storm looks against the architecture of Longhena? We hear the rain pelting on the steps and quay of the Salute. The design of that church is so curious in origin, being taken, or so it is said, from one of the woodcuts in that most lovely of cinquecento books, the *Hypnerotomachia* of Polyphilo. Its huge stone buttresses in the form of whorls, of seashells, of marine vegetation, give emphasis to the light and graceful dome, making of the whole building a conception like sea-architecture, a new element imagined in a dream, or the magnification of some actual pavilion, some rare shell of the ocean. Other buildings by Longhena prove the imagination in this neglected master. We admire the Palazzo Rezzonico as the most successful Venetian building in the full classical manner since Sansovino, but the Palazzo Pesaro is another matter. This, again, is a sea-palace. It is the last work of Longhena, begun when the architect was nearly eighty years of age. What is superb in the Palazzo Pesaro is its curving side wall, and the plumed helms and masks of lions, above the windows, on the diamond pointed stones of its main façade. The whole building rises in the canal with the same certainty that an old vessel rides upon the water. Of all the Venetian architects Longhena was the solitary person who studied his buildings in order to make them different from churches or palaces on terra firma. The Palazzo Pesaro must be floated past, or looked at over water, not walked beneath. And so it is, also, with the Salute. The Istrian stone, which weathers like our white Portland, makes the Palazzo Pesaro to stand in a perpetual mimic moonlight, matching in desuetude with the green waters of the canal.

All over the town, and all night long, the storm goes on. It is impossible to sleep. Lightning and thunder are continuous. Having thought of Longhena, we see in imagination the little

## *The Fair of Bergamo*

church of Santo Stae, on the Grand Canal below the Palazzo Pesaro, with its red-stuccoed parrocchia, where the priest lives, and its hidden altarpieces by Guardi, one of the curiosities of Venice, 'hidden', because the church is only open from five till seven in the morning. There is the Ridotto Venier, along the Merceria, a set of little rooms that were once a gambling hell, exquisite in their stucco walls and ceilings, in their doors, and in their inlaid floors, indeed, the finest work of the Venetian eighteenth century. There are the numberless little paintings by Pietro Longhi, in different palaces, and the frescoes of carnival scenes, by Alessandro Longhi, on the staircase of the Palazzo Grassi. Speaking for myself, I never admired, overmuch, the lacquer or the painted furniture of Venice. But the masks and the bird-men were another matter. A pair of oil paintings in the Palazzo Papadopoli, now gone, were the epitome of this. They were scenes of Carnival by the great Tiepolo, himself, of more import to a poet than any altarpiece. We may think that, apart from the age of armour, human beings have never travelled further from the reality of appearances than in the Venetian carnival. It would be invidious to attempt a description of this pair of pictures, beyond saying that their scene is the terra firma, not Venice, but the mainland. We would choose Bergamo for their background. Tiepolo had worked there, on his frescoes for the Cappella Colleoni, and we may think we see the sign of Bergamo in the yellow light, in the stone pinetrees and the ramparts. This town was of special celebrity, in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, for Harlequin was invented here. It was famous for its carnival and for a fair, the Fiera di Sant' Alessandro, which was held for a fortnight in the early autumn. There, in the booths and on the trestle theatres, these paintings of Tiepolo would come to life. This was the carnival of the bird men, Bergamo, more than a hundred miles inland from Venice, is the furthest town to show the insignia of the Republic, the winged lion of St. Mark upon its pillar. It is on the confines of the Venetian territory, but it faces toward Venice. And, coming back to Venice through Brescia and Verona and Vicenza, through Padua and Mestre, down the river Brenta, the first sight in Venice next door, even, to the prosaic railway station, is the church of the Scalzi, or bare-footed Carmelites, with its frescoes by Tiepolo which were destroyed during the last war. Of

## *Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra*

these, I remember, as a child, certain painted fragments in the spandrels of the dome, which depicted ladies in crinolines, holding fans, who looked down as from an opera box into the body of the church. It was the contrast of these paintings, the gorgeous marbles and the twisted pillars of the altar, with the name of the bare-footed friars, that stayed in the memory.

Round the corner of the first canal, the Cannaregio, was the Palazzo Labia, with its painted history of Antony and Cleopatra. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that these frescoes by Tiepolo must assert, even upon the majority of persons, a most particular poetical fascination. Not only the painted figures, but the splendour of the architecture, assist in this intoxication. We have no time to tell those histories nor describe the ceiling with its clouds and white horses, and the naked models of the painter. There is only space to mention the side panels or wings. In one of these we see the rows of silver dishes, tier above tier, for the triumph or the banquet. The detail of their execution is an aesthetic pleasure and, in part of them, in relief against the buffet, stands a bearded servitor who is typical of Tiepolo, a man of oriental type, the Turk or Albanian of his imagination, red haired and aquiline, in a white dress and the white cap of a chef or scullion, who pours out wine from a fiasco into a glass held for him by a negro page. The other panel has a man of middle age, a sea captain or overseer, who appears to be watching or giving orders. Masts and sails show in the corner of this panel. In both of them, the grain or brushwork of the fresco is a delight, inch by inch, as if we could see him while he painted it. That miracle of proportion, in what was shaped, or what omitted, in how his uncertainties are so hazardous and uncertain, seen close to the eyes, makes us linger at these painted wings and neglect, almost, the disembarkation and the banquet. We can hardly look from them to those greater frescoes in anticipation, but stay by the pearly dishes, the white sails, or the flask of wine.

At the Palazzo Labia, more than in any other work of Tiepolo we find the influence of Veronese. It is a scene of banquet, frescoed within the banquetting hall. Tiepolo has even painted Cleopatra in costumes of the time of Veronese. The intention has been to rival with the great banquetting scenes of Veronese, painted for the refectories of the Venetian convents. There were four of these.

## *The Four Refectories*

The Marriage of Cana, now in the Louvre, came from the refectory of San Giorgio Maggiore, the Banquet in the House of Simon the Pharisee came from the refectory of the Servite monks. It was presented by the Republic to Louis XIV, and used to hang in the Salon d'Hercule, at Versailles. Now, it is in the Louvre. The third of these paintings, the same in subject as the preceding, but treated differently, was in the refectory of Santi Giovanni and Paolo, but it was long ago destroyed by fire. The fourth, now at Dresden, was also in a refectory. Venetian splendour found its epitome in them. The Marriage of Cana, with its hundred and twenty figures and its scheme of architecture, despite its defects of woodenness or waxwork stillness, must remain an expression of Venetian pride and power, even in its ruin and exile in the Louvre. When this painting and its three companion banquet scenes were the living sights of Venice, still independent and alive, these were Shakespearean dramas always playing, with the curtain ever raised. This was the great Veronese, more than in the Palace of the Doges, or in San Sebastiano. In imagination, we would pass the whole day in going from one to other by gondola, comparing their magnificence.

But it is full blown, an end or culmination, with no promise in it. Now, in our own decay, in the end of Europe, we must love the first beginnings, the early unfolding of the flower. We would sooner Bellini, or Carpaccio, than Veronese. Having written at some length of the legend of St Ursula in the Accad mia, and of the paintings in the Scuola San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, there remains the picture by Carpaccio belonging to the series of the Miracles of the Cross. The well-known Procession in the Piazza of St Mark, by Gentile Bellini, is of the same origin. They are to be seen, now, in the Accad mia, and are all that are left of the paintings by the Bellini, Carpaccio, Titian, Tintoretto, and others, formerly in the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista. All the rest have perished. The picture in question has for subject the cure of a lunatic by a fragment of the Cross, and in the background of the painting is the old wooden bridge of the Rialto. In this instance, we have the fantasy of Carpaccio turned to realism and the representation of an actual scene, such as it was to be recognised by his contemporaries. It had to pass their criticisms. The scene for this miracle, as depicted by him, was a familiar corner of Venice, its

## *Courtesans*

Piccadilly Circus, for the Rialto was the only bridge across the Grand Canal. We have to believe that the precise buildings are shown in the painting, with no exaggeration, and that the only fantasy is in the crowd of persons. Even the characteristic chimneys of Venice, so oriental in form that they carry the mind to Grand Cairo, for they are turbans or the swathed helms of warriors, even the multitude of these does not exceed the truth. Owing to the construction of the houses, to the wooden timbers of the old Rialto, and to the striped dresses of the passers-by, this picture gives the impression of long strips, comparable to the chequered backgrounds of certain mediaeval tapestries. It has, indeed, something of a magpie quality. The negro gondolier in his parti-coloured hose gives the key of colour. And the usual popinjays of Carpaccio add their cockscorn finery to the scene. They are stippled and diapered, with fringed or scalloped sleeves, all the tricks of the haberdasher displayed in them.

In the result, this picture is no less full of fantasy than any painting by Carpaccio in which his imagination has suffered no checks upon its credibility. It is impossible to look upon the scene without hearing the noises of this crowd of persons. And, at the back of our minds, we see the other inventions of his genius; the *Two Courtesans* of the Museo Correr, with their bleached, fair hair and the traditional pose or attitude of their profession, waiting at the window or upon the balcony, interesting to ourselves because it is a representation of the famed courtesans of Venice, but we would know, by instinct, to what calling they belong, and they could, as well, be sitting outside the sordid doorways of the quartier réservé in Marseille. But Carpaccio is more than an illustrator. He is no mere Pinturicchio. His fairy tale fantasies are more solid than the green enchantments of Benozzo Gozzoli, than his vineyards and his Tuscan valleys with their peopling of fair haired pages and young cavaliers. There is, in Carpaccio, a national or Venetian force, and an inborn familiarity with the forms of shipping and with foreign travellers from the Levant or Turkey. His picture of St. George slaying the dragon (in the Sacristy of San Giorgio Maggiore) gives us the other Carpaccio. In this, the conformity of the trees, and the whole landscape helping or assisting in the pattern, make of it an expressionist painting in the sense that Altdorfer or Grunewald belong to that Northern in-

## *Stone Turbans*

vention. It is in this vein, too, that Carpaccio in his colder subjects approaches Brueghel. Those, as we have said, are parables of dead bones. It is the desert of the anchorites.

In this city, and all through this storm of rain and thunder, we live among the painters. Their age of gold has turned, for ourselves, into a golden age. We can think of nothing more inspiring than their names, than the very turning of their syllables upon the tongue. This is the colour of the Venetian painters, Dalmatian in the instance of Carpaccio, and that much of Tintoretto which was latent in him and was developed by El Greco when he went to Spain. Of Tiepolo we have already stressed the Turkish or Albanian figures, who recur again and again and are familiar from his frescoes. But nothing in Venice more reveals that it faces towards the lands of the Orient than certain stone reliefs built into the walls of the houses. We are thinking of the Campo dei Mori, so called because of three figures in enormous turbans, one of them leading a camel, to be seen upon a couple of houses, one of which is the Casa del Tintoretto, once lived in by the painter. They are said to be portraits of Greek merchants from the Morea, of late Byzantine origin, dating from the time of the Palaeologi. Being in a remote part of Venice, near the Madonna dell' Orto, it is but seldom they are seen. They are distant relations, in date and style, to the two porphyry groups of kings or warriors embracing, that are on the outside wall of St. Mark's, near to the entrance to the Palace of the Doges. Some say that their subject is the division of the Roman Empire and the Caesars of the East and West, Valens and Valentinian, embracing. It is a mystery but their place is beside the objects in the treasury of St. Mark's, the cups of agate or of rock crystal which are of Egyptian workmanship, dating from the dynasty of the Fatimites, a thousand years ago, or loot from St. Sophia, taken by Doge Dandolo when Constantinople was sacked, in 1204, and the treasures of Greece and Rome destroyed. Even down to later times, this preoccupation with the Orient persisted in Venice, the signs of which are the Turk's heads carved as keystones over the windows of many Venetian palaces. Their great turbans and moustachios, as we float past on the water, remind us of those peculiar carvings on the Casa del Tintoretto. And something in their ferocious pantomime expression tells us how true it was that the Venetians looked upon the Arsenal as the

## *The Different Sounds of Thunder*

'boulevard', not only of Venice, but of Italy, and even of all of Europe, against the Turks.

In a storm, such as this, there are so many kinds of thunder. The lightning strikes. And the thunder comes with terrible and portentous sound, rushing at high speed, as down a wood, towards you. The noise of it seems to echo from the timber of the trees, and from a million branches thrashed and broken. Or it booms, as though inside a bowl or cavern, playing, at being there, but attempting to escape. It can hit with a lash, the crack of which must be its impact upon a building, while it booms and rattles and, like the bull in the bullring, puts in its horns and will not take them out, goring and worrying the piteous entrails. Or it can threaten and rumble, while it lies on the air and looks down for an opening. And, the next time, hits with certainty and probes into the wound.

We hear it from all over the town. But, now, this hallucination, or this chain of images, removes to a particular place. We must have thunder on the Zattere, outside a certain window. It was there that, in imagery, we heaped the pearls and seashells, strewing the treasures of the deep at the feet of whom? Of a person who was half-way between the Sacred and Profane. It was, once, that person; but, now, she is multiplied into many shapes and forms. We have met her in the hot glare of the Fondouk, and as the portress or lay sister sitting at the door. In metamorphosis she becomes Sœur Monique, and dissipates into the hundred ghosts or fragments of her personality. It is no longer one person, for the person and the time have changed. There was that night of storm, one August, in the lodging close to the trabaccoli. And there was that other summer, which was more Sacred than Profane.

### x1

Thus, we would apostrophise as the western wind of love. It must, of nature, be *diametrically* opposite to her sisters. In the very sound of the words to which these shadows have attached themselves, immediately, and without thought or contradiction, there lies the difference. East and West are where humanity has



## *The Western Wind of Love*

thrived in its millions. There are no polar wastes, and only nearness to the booming South, where the surf sounds like thunder. This, then, was more temperate. It was less cold, and had not that extreme of heat. Its origin was from far away, not from above our heads, or from below our feet. This gave to it a strangeness of unfamiliarity, made audible, even, in the accents of her voice. Enough has already been written to point, by contrast, the dark hair of this ghost, or phantom, for, like those others, she is that most unusual of phenomena, a phantasm of the living. She had, then, for this must be read in days to come, dark hair, with something of a dark or southern skin. With this, green eyes, or hazel, as if cheated of their fairness. Something of a Creole, but bright and not languorous, with the vitality of a young race living in a new land. This made her generous, unselfish, and accommodating, her eyes set wide apart, as though in token of these things. That has been admired out of antiquity in emblem of those virtues, and it is never wrong. With this went that refinement of bone which the New World has made its mark of breeding, fine ankles, little and delicate knees, legs which gleamed through the meshes of the stocking. This thing is the very signature of the New World. It is by this that their women triumph over the clumsy extremities of a continent that has lost all culture and cohesion. It is in sign of their sophistication, but, also, something of the savage enters into this thinness and slightness of the bones. A Red Indian ancestry, and more of that than can ever be the sober fact, is eloquent of this beauty. Something of a winged lightness, a picking and choosing of her steps, resulted from this nativity, or inborn trait; it ruled her appearance upon any scene, and could be heard in the going and coming of her footsteps. Of that new continent, also, was the dazzling evenness and whiteness of her teeth, giving a smile that could be likened to the sweet interior of some fruit or flower. So many of these qualities indicate the character, and all of them were born out in the living reality. This held the actual proving of so much that had been mere surmise and intuition on the part of the person who had lost every susceptibility at the first shock of contact with her. It was, therefore, nothing less than the reward of pure instinct, for the first results were a complete and total blindness in which nothing further, or indeed, anything of any import whatever, could be seen. The senses were numbed.

## *Shadow Kingdom*

The past and the future were nothing but a haze. All else was subordinate to this one sensation, in which the outcome or end of so much emotion had hardly the force to find its own expression. It was, in any case, a solution so tremendous in its scope that the mind could hardly take in its possibilities of accomplishment and, having once done so, must work for nothing else than this, however improbable, as it might seem, that it could ever be achieved. It was brave to ask for everything, and for all of life, almost at the first meeting, but such was the counsel of desperation. It succeeded, after many and long delays, the first breach, it is not impossible, having been made, without knowing it at the time, owing to the desperate and unhappy impact, and the infection of that unhappiness, at the first meeting. It must have been a misery that carried conviction, that was communicable of its truth and sincerity. It was an appeal for help, for the holding out of hands, to which a soul opened and a heart made reply. This may happen to most human beings not more than once in a lifetime, while there are those who have been less fortunate and to whom it never comes.

But the coda or finale spreads and multiplies in imagery. Its fragments are tossed from one to another like the ragged clouds of the storm. What we need is not the thunder but its spark of energy. It must be August lightning. No other month is so magical. It is heavy with autumn when the fruits will ripen. August is the month of mist and dew. We met it in the ilex wood, and now it lies upon the waters. Listen to it! Is it not more leafy than July, with less of the white light of heat, and more foreboding, more thunder in its name? Perhaps August is the month of coalescence, the marriage of summer and winter, the new year conceived among the yellow corn, when Mars is crowned with dog-grass, the weed of the battlefield, and wars begin. Day and night shake with his artillery. It is the month of fate. Part is apprehension, and the dread of things to come.

Your right hand, or your left, may seal your future. It is, thus, the shadow kingdom. You walk with shadows. In the pitiful silence, in the dead hour before dawn, the dancer danced again and stayed awhile by the pearlshell window opening on the day. Then, wonder of wonder, the pearlshell hour, the first breath of the morning, brought her again and we wept together at the cool-

### *Three Visions*

ing of our hearts We wept to be parted in that sweet breath fragrance, in the dawning of the day; I woke up, weeping, and reached out for the jasmine, for the bunch of jasmine lying by my hand. She died in that sweetness: we both died together.

This disintegration, this dream imagery continues. Another night it was the well head. This began as if it were a table of most exquisite wood, lovely in its grain and marbling Of all things, a dining table, for rare suppers of not more than two or four; but the reflections on its shining surface, in which everything was clear as in a mirror, passed, through metamorphosis, into the sound of hidden voices, not singing, nor talking, but mere voices. Their colloquy could not be heard in words. it was but intonation. In the next moment they were recognised; and the wind of poetry, the sacred trance descended How lovely was this experience! It was with a beating heart, and in anticipation, that the dream took another phase and the table changed in image into a well head. O would her ghost never come up from the water! It was at this moment reminiscent, and I knew it even in my dream, of George Peele's 'The Song of the Well', when Zantuppa draws the water and the voice sings 'Gently dip, but not too deep For fear thou make the golden beard to weep ' But the colour of that maiden was 'white and red' 'Fair maiden, white and red, Comb me smooth and stroke my head And thou shalt have some cockell-bread And every hair a sheaf shall be, And every sheaf a golden tree.'

This vision was more personal It was the portrait of a person. This was more sensual. It was a poem by Keats and not a country song by George Peele. Her colour was not 'white and red' Her shade was the camellia and the nightingale And, still, she was imprisoned in the water well They were magical words that were spoken underneath our feet Nothing in religion or philosophy could be as beautiful as this, or so moving to the spirit. What did it mean, and what is the interpretation? Oh no more than the image, for the little it is worth Such things come with no warning; though nothing, in life or death, has a more ghostly meaning Ah! what is happening? What now? But the dancer never came up from the fountain We were to see no more of her. It would be cruel were it but her image in a mirror, or in the water. But this vision died on the lips of it. There was no glimpse of her. And

## *Circus Acrobat*

yet, on waking, it was as though she had come to visit one in prison and the golden bars were broken.

Such dreams would come at long intervals, for no reason. Another time, but now, it was the street of a little town. There were inns with bow windows, but not in England. It was somewhere in the mountains, maybe in Switzerland. The mode of travel was a motor car. Unlike most dreams, in which you get the persons and then invent a background for them, this began with that setting and, immediately, one knew what was impending. It was the shooting of a film. The poetry was in the long and magical delay, to the end of the street, and out to where the houses thinned. This time there would be no disappointment. And, now, the detail which, first of all, had been supplied for proof, for similitude, faded into insignificance. What did it matter, since the truth was coming! But when, oh! when! and in what form!

She was upon a white horse and, as we came up to her, was already the acrobat of the fair, stooping down from the stirrups with her head by the horse's belly, dressed for the wild west more than for the circus ring, though the excitement of this vision drives all memory of detail from the mind. Nothing remains but her features, and the breath or poetry of her person. In a moment the motor had gone past; but her face came, smiling, to the back, still at that angle, as if on a level with her horse's body; or posed for the camera in a close-up. Ah! then, the wind blew as though one had been twenty and first felt it on the wrist and forehead, and beating at the heart. It was as the flute of Krishna, to the sound of which we feel his music in the pores of our skins. We would listen and look on, ravished, unable to move, or motionless and weeping. It was, even, that her *maquillage*, the shadows underneath her eyes; her painted lips, her cheekbones that shone and were rounded like the sheen of porcelain, her blue eyelids; her eyelashes and eyebrows, made her into a temple dancer. We would linger, again and again, at the blue eyelids of the little *bayadère*. For they are touched with silver and, like the bruises on a nectarine, reveal the beauty of her skin. The grease paint, and the painting of her lips which are blue or mulberry for the sake of the camera, make her equivocal. This dancer, who should not speak any language that we understand, brings all her artifice into the part that she is playing. Here and now, she is a circus acrobat. But more than that.

## *The Bayadère*

She only takes the rôle because of the film plot. It is a play within a play. This person, who has the secret of so many disguises, is of the same blood as ourselves.

If it be true that dancers can never possess quite the same fullness of personality as have the actors in a play, for their art is but dumb show, this deficiency has its compensation if they have great physical beauty, for that can be admired and studied to advantage in their every movement. It is part of the born genius of a dancer to have this physical perfection, and their shortcomings in that respect can be equivalent to a deficiency in the technique of their art and can never be remedied in the eyes and in the mind, however much, as in some dancers of genius, the technical skill is in excess upon the bodily appearance. Here, the physical was in exaggeration upon the actual. This dancer was more beautiful than she was skilled in her art. She was dark haired, with green eyes that changed their colour in the lights of the theatre. The fascination of such beauty put to these uses lay in its hieratic, or its intangible practices, in that side, or half of its life, in which, owing to the conventions of the theatre, this person who could not be approached or spoken to until the performance was over, could alter and transform herself into so many different images or travesties of her own beauty. Behind this, her true self remained unchanged, to be resumed once she had shaken off the sacred trance. It is this doubling of existence, and the multiplication of appearances, that put all dancers into the category of temple hierants, goddesses of the altar. Their devotion is to a cult or religion. It is to this that they have vowed themselves. It is not one, but a hundred different forms that play before the eyes of the imagination. The mere repetition of one or other serves but to discover new secrets in what was known before. And always, behind them, lies the truth, the inner heart of personality.

There was no more, on this occasion, than the meeting and the recognition. But how can one describe the magical excitement! Like the stone of the alchemists it transforms metals and turns the air to gold. It is so unusual for the vision to come back again. More often, it does not materialize at all. In this, there was the double experience. Why should such things happen, but in mercy and from affection! They strike into the soul and are more near to tears than pleasure. And yet, in sleep, they lay soft hands upon the

### *Loosening of the Silver Cord*

heart. It would be fine to die like that, with the hand of youth upon one's heart, but we may be certain the dying dream of other things. They must go back to their childhood, or they dream in images of death until they feel the cold of that, and die. But this is the adolescent

These are no longer visions This is the profane world, entered by the spirit through long agony, or, sometimes, with no suffering at all And we come without warning to the breaking of the seals We are on the coral atoll, or in the ranging whirlwind There is no background Nothing but the sky, which is lit by lightning. This moment is the loosening of the silver cord, the golden bowl broken No need for a mask to hide her face or hair. We see a hand in a glove of black net. This is the loosening of the girdle It slips to the ground and we behold the waist of amber





*Book VI*

LONDON CHARIVARI







## *London Charivari\**

**F**or the lightening of our thoughts here are two pairs of figures. All four of them are embryonic, in the sense that the butterfly is foreshadowed in the chrysalis. That is to say, they contain a prophecy the span of which has but just been reached. Their lengthening shadow touched ourselves and then receded. We have all seen persons who resembled them.

It is the dude in coat and trousers. The nineteenth century man. The fop, or masher, or any other name for him. This was man's livery for a hundred years and more. Upon occasion he wore it for his coffin. It is outmoded. The boots, with their long toes, strap into the trousers. None of our four tyros has seen a steamboat, or set foot inside a train. It is not their fault, for this is just before that time. All the same, they are ghosts of a hundred summers, of a hundred seasons, whom we have before us in this evil hour. They are Monstrosities of 1816 and 1821. And we must give that word its true significance, for in a hundred years it has changed its meaning. To be called a monster was a half-endearment. It meant something excessive and without restraint, or a person whose attentions were flattering, or even welcomed. At the same time, an extravagance, an absurdity. The feminine Monstrosities were not so favoured by the artist. Perhaps the eighteenth century was not quite dead, when men had been the peacocks and women were the hens. This male ascendancy had lingered on. It was men who wore colours, and, on the part of women, anything but simplicity was a presumption. Their attempts at fashion are a mere absurdity. The men of the Monstrosities are more directly funny, though their vanity is not attacked. They are drawn, half-mocking, half in admiration.

But we must come nearer. We must feel and touch their clothes, and hear their voices. First of all, to the Monstrosities of

\* Begun on the 13 June, 1940, the day the German armies entered Paris

## *Monstrosities of 1816*

eighteen hundred and sixteen Two young men who are encased in overcoats and braiding. In this respect they are rivals and, yet, in partnership together. They must go to the same tailor Or could it be that each has his own particular tradesman who will devote all his labours to this living and walking pattern of his skill? Persons, it may be, who are a little subservient, and of foreign blood. Who knows? Jews, or Italians, or, perhaps, a Frenchman. Persons who love gilding, and, in its glitter, betray a warmer sun. In their back parlours, in the gilt mirrors of their shops. But it is more than gold frogging, or the application of black braid It is a question, also, of fur collars and fur linings. There are Astrachan and Persian lamb. Astrachan, especially, which is curled like a French poodle. An invaluable discovery. No other material can match, or, indeed, rival with the talents of the hairdresser And he, of course, must, or should be, French, or carry a French name But what is the idea behind this pair of strange appearances?

In their attempts at the ideal they have contrived to look the same. They have reached an identity together It is the difference between your right foot and your left As to the trend of their ambition, that is another matter For it is most peculiar that two young men of fashion, self-appointed, should appear, quilted from top to toe, and so stiffly tailored that it is an agony to move, or turn the head Looking closely at them, we remember that it is only a couple of years after the Peace of 1814, when the Allied armies entered Paris after Napoleon had gone to Elba. The Parisians stared in wonder at the Highlanders in their kilts and feathered bonnets, at Uhlans and Lancers, at the dolmans and fur pelisses of the Puszta. The Russians, especially, were a subject for astonishment Cossacks had set up their bivouacs along the Champs Elysées In the next year, and after Waterloo, London, also, went cosmopolitan This pair of young men could be compared to the wildest of Hussars, but on foot Cossacks, we might call them, of the retreat from Moscow, padded for the cold, with an augmentation from their horses' cloths, as well, but all come forth again from the crucible of fashion. Cossacks of the mode, in the latest style of hairdressing They have put themselves into uniform. But look at it more closely and you will see it is not for war. It is a walking-out dress

What it presupposes is sempiternal snow. You could not expect

## *Cossacks in Hyde Park*

these officers, these men of fashion from a legendary North, to have made provision for a London summer. For, in their fantasy, Russia was always cold. Yet, it is but fantasy. They are, in fact, the Monstrosities of Hyde Park Corner, near the statue of Achilles, but before that bronze figure was offered by the women of England in honour of Wellington. So do not demand of them that they should be true Russians. It is allowed that the beaux may be influenced in their ideas by the notions of a foreign clime. The Russians, and their Czar Alexander, had impressed the world. This was a tribute to them, and an attempt to introduce that novelty into the streets and drawingrooms of London.

But this is in exaggeration. For are these the real beaux? Come a little nearer still and listen to them. We hear an unfashionable accent, a drawing language full of slang and turns of phrase. The speech of green room and hairdresser's saloon, hints of the cockpit and the boxing ring. They are not bucks of the first water. Or can it be we are mistaken? Who could be more far-fetched, more fantastic than Alvanley, or Petersham, more redundant than the Regent? None of them had the good taste, the refinement of Beau Brummel. We know the wasp waist and striped trousers of Lord Petersham, his goatee beard and whiskers; and the odd or boat-shaped hat which, together with his features, gave him something of a Jewish air. There were Sefton; and Worcester, dressed in black, and walking with his poodle. All of them, we know this, had their peculiar voices. Some spoke like their own grooms, or imitated, if unconsciously, a huntsman or a jockey. Others had a family accent, come down to them from generations of country houses in great parks. We do not feel certain our two tyros are of these. The great beaux of the Regency never dressed alike. It was their pride to be different. Our pair of heroes are standing in the wings, not either upon the stage and playing to the world, nor among its workers. Onlookers, gorgeously uniformed, in fact, dressed to kill, but a little unsure of their background.

And what has brought them into this close identity together? Do they share the same lodgings? Never, for one moment, could we take them for two brothers. Everyone who reads this must have among his own acquaintance characters, like these, who from similarity of circumstance and condition have become alike. They are comrades in arms. Both are drawn together, as if by a

## *A Visit to a Beau*

magnet. One enhances, or completes, the other. They are inseparable; in appointed places, and at certain hours. And there are others like them, or, it may be, themselves, who, in a sense, resent this near facsimile and avoid each other, delighting their public, therefore, whenever they are seen together. Such could be this moment. And, were it the truth, they would be forced into pretending a friendship which is not genuine. They are, however, too young in years to have endured a lifetime of such competition. It is, of course, the genius of George Cruikshank that depicts for us these possibilities. And he may have emphasized their likeness to each other. Did they ever, then, exist at all? Or are they his creation? It does not matter. But, of all the Monstrosities among whom they figure they are most closely studied, and, for ourselves, it is impossible not to believe in them.

They are our mirror of fashion, and we would look into it. Do not, however, expect their images to be imprisoned there. We find them at one moment in mean streets, in Clerkenwell or Islington, and, the next, before a muslined dressing table. This is because we alter in our opinion of them. And it is, as well, our opportunity. A fine morning came when it was time to put on those coats newly arrived, last evening, after many fittings from the tailor. A great parcel, with much soft paper round the cuffs and collar. In those days there were no cardboard boxes. The boy who brought the parcel passed so many brightly painted iron railings. These were newly treated every spring, and had gone black by winter. If one of our beaux lives in Clerkenwell, and the other in a terrace near Hyde Park, there are these railings just the same. They were, and are, in sign manual of London. But we must be careful in our chronology, for this was before Nash's rebuilding and the age of stucco. It may be, even, that the fantastic nature of those post-war fashions was due, in part, to the absence of their proper background. Little, or nothing, had been built for twenty years. They were capricious and conjectural, completely 'in the air', and unrelated to the scene. It will be noticed that this series of skits by Cruikshank continues, as though in proof of our contention, until the late 'twenties, by which time the stucco streets and terraces were ready. After that, the fashions become sober and coherent. They take a direction that has nothing to do with the cold, mass classicism of the Regency, but



MONSTROSITIES OF 1816  
by G. Cruikshank



MONSTROSITIES OF 1821  
by G. Cruikshank



## *A Visit to a Beau*

they do not lose control again. Their development is logical, not sporadic and without plan.\*

This person, for we take them separately, attend to them one at a time following our military comparison, has camped out in his rooms. He has hung the walls with draperies, of which the straight folds resemble the temporary decorations of a pavilion or marquee. His bed has a canopy in the form of a tent. The chairs, like those in the bedroom of Talma, the tragedian, may be shaped like drums. His sitting room has a flock paper on the walls. There are elaborate pelmets to the curtains. In every detail it is suggested that quick and drastic steps have had to be taken in order to bring such old fashioned premises into conformity with modern taste. The permanent frame is not yet ready. This is a mere temporary expedient. It is, this is the reason, the beginning of a new century.

We shall find in his dressingroom a long cheval mirror and a dummy for his clothes. The dummy, indeed, is already dressed like him. It is as though a lay figure were wearing the model's clothes. The dummy, a limbless featureless fetish, is made exactly in his image, to his precise measurement, but without resemblance, as if it were the work of primitive sculptors who could not catch a likeness and so left it formal, the mere convention for a man. And yet it is his fetish, his statue made in his own image. In extreme cases of the Regency infection we would find a wig put out upon a barber's block. That this was not endemic only in Great Britain could be proved in a multitude of instances. Of this the composer Rossini is most typical. His rooms in Paris, in his famous apartment in the Boulevard des Italiens, where he lived until late in the 'sixties, had a number of wigs upon stands, often visible through an open door into his bedroom, and connecting him in the imagination of all who visited him with those far-off days of the Re-

\* We would draw attention to the fashion plates issued by B. Read, 12 Hart Street, Bloomsbury Square, and Broadway, New York. These show the epitome of masculine fashion from 1830 to about 1846. Most of them would seem to be coloured aquatints after Robert Cruikshank, elder brother to the more famous George. They show scenes in the Surrey Zoo, a skating scene on the lake in Regents Park with the new stucco terraces in the background, a delightful print with William IV riding in the foreground past the bow windows of the Steyne at Brighton, and so forth. A few of the original gouache drawings by Robert Cruikshank are in the Bethnal Green Museum. His fashion plates are the masterworks of this neglected artist. The whole series, which is very rare, comprises some twelve or fifteen plates.



## *The Geography of Snuff*

gency or Restoration Much earlier, when he came to London in the winter of 1823, he lodged at No. 90 Regent Street, and, if not, ill in bed with nerves, took a pet parrot and sat on top of Nash's then existent colonnade, looking down on the traffic and the passers-by. Beau Brummel, too, had usually a cockatoo or parrot in his rooms. Even in his decline at Calais his drawingroom was enlivened by a fine macaw. We place, then, perhaps without anomaly, a parrot in this house that we are visiting. Its home is a cage shaped like a pavilion. The bright feathers of its chest and wings shine in the spring sunlight, or in the dark days put to shame the fire in the grate.

This parrot of the Amazon came, so the beau might like to think, from close to the lands of snuff, an exotic paradise confused in no certainty with the hills of green Pekoe and the coffee groves, all products of the Indies. In the names of the different kinds of snuff there is preserved, indeed, a particular poetry that cannot have been less potent when the kegs or casks were new 'A fine old rappee of San Domingo, just arrived', the tobacconist's advertisement would run. The earlier sorts, become old fashioned by this time, were Bergamota, Jessamina, Orangery and Neroly, named from the scents from which they were compounded and dating, it is evident, from late in the seventeenth century. There had been, among the foreign snuffs sold in London, Carotte, Palillio, which was Portuguese in origin, Étrenne, offered every year to Louis XV upon his birthday by the different snuff manufacturers of Paris, from which the best was chosen and called by the number of that year, and Bureau, of which the history was somewhat similar. Violet Strasburg, made in the city of that name, of powdered rappee and bitter almonds mixed with ambergris and attar-jul, was the favourite snuff of Queen Charlotte and every morning she added to it a spoonful of green tea. There was Bolangaro's Hollanda and St. Vincent: Bolangaro being an Italian snuff manufacturer who lived near Frankfurt and retired to Italy with a large fortune. Other kinds were the various sorts of Kendal, called after the brown cloth of that capital of Westmorland, made there by descendants of an old colony of Flemish weavers, with, in all probability, a green snuff, scented, after the green cloth of Kendal for which that town was famed. There were Scholten's best rappee, Gillespie's Scotch snuff, in whose memory the wooden

## *The Beau of Clerkenwell*

Highlanders still stand on the pavement at the door of the tobacconist; Prince's, made for the Regent and to be bought even now in London, in the Haymarket; plain and scented St. Domingo; Dutch and Strasburg, Hoxton, and all other sorts of rappee, Spanish, Seville and Havannah, Brazil, Portugal and Bergamot Others were Macauba, highly scented, from Martinique, Princeza, from Lisbon, Cuba, Latakia, made from the light tobacco of Persia, Masulipatam, dark, moist, richly scented, brought from the coast of Coromandel, and Penalvar, a mixture of tobacco and red earth, coming from Havannah, of great pungency and used, also, as a dentifrice. Such, in brief, is the geography of snuff. All, or most of these, the beau could buy. But we will return, later, to his other shopping.

For the Charivari takes us to the mean street where himself, or his companion or rival might be living. Shall we say it is Pentonville, near to the home of Cruikshank, and observed by him. In one of the long terraces where the mist hangs in the autumn mornings; every house alike, so that there might be this beau, this 'Burlington Bertie', living in each one. In a street, perhaps, not far from Sadlers' Wells. There is no cheval mirror, no parrot in his lodging. Oh! to breathe, for a moment, this apartment air of more than a hundred years ago! To hear their voices on the narrow stairs: to choose a day, it does not matter when, or in what month, and see, and touch, and listen to them! A more wonderful experience than to enter Pharaoh's tomb, where everything is only dead, in catalepsis, and air or light will crumble it to dust. One could not ask for anything more humble, a mere Metropolitan instance, with naught of history or romance to it. How like a ghost he is, with his thin trousers and his pointed shoes! We see it, too, in his cravat and in the way his hair is cut! The ghost of the modern man; and his clothes, in some manner, are as the clothes we have cast off. Our chrysalis; and black and withered as that rejected skin would be. Perhaps every generation in the form and style of its clothing is midwife, or funeral mute, to those that follow after it. Certainly this person whom we visit is the devil, the man in black, of the old story.

And we begin, in the light of this, to look at more of the Monstrosities. We mentioned, in our beginning, another pair of figures. Here they are. One, the exact facsimile in little, of his

## *Monstrosities of 1821*

bigger brother. Both are drawn alike, even to the smallest detail. But it is peculiar how their difference in height brings out dissimilarities in their expression. The elder, or taller of the pair, is all inaneness and vacuity. In the smaller of the pair this is translated, only by the dwarfing or compression, into a blind and mole like acquiescence. He does everything that his elder tells him, and it is as though his eyes were not yet opened. Hand held in hand, he is led along, like a little homunculus. We feel that he cannot speak, and cannot think, being in all things subordinate and dependent on his brother. This pair of figures are near to being a masterpiece of caricature. You may almost measure the scale of their exaggeration. For they are not, they never could be, a father and his son. It is a case, quite simply, of two absurd young men. The elder is a dude, a zany, hopelessly in debt, and for ever laughed at behind his back. He will have, inexplicably, some success with women. The other is in diminuendo of his brother; but will never achieve it and is not even, seriously in debt. Everyone has known these two brothers; and we meet them, here, as though standardized for a hundred years and more to come.

Other Monstrosities from those curious years could be described as being more annual than perennial. Their importance, that is to say, is for their year, not for the future. We choose the two beaux, at foot of the statue of Achilles, who are ogling two women. Their dress, still, is that worn in the Napoleonic wars. They have breeches, not trousers; their coats have wide collars, they wear top hats, the top hat of Thurtell, and of Bellingham, who murdered Mr. Perceval. These are the roysterers of Real Life in London, of Alken and Pierce Egan, of the brothers Cruikshank. One of them has his monocle, or quizzing glass, in the handle of his cane. Both men have wide hips, from the fashion of their clothes, and this gives to them an overbearing, a truculent or rather bullying appearance. The bulk of them together, walking arm-in-arm, is like a gust of wind. They seem to be blown or inflated in our direction, about to topple over. We must think of them, in analogy, as nautical sportsmen, leaning upon the wind of their own half-drunken impulses. The two women upon whom they bear down advance towards them holding up the hem of their dresses in order to show their ankles and their petticoats. This was an affectation of the time, for, in the background of the

## *Frights and Fashions*

print, other women, always two by two, walk away in the same manner. The unfreshness of these women is most wonderfully expressed, and to such point that they are faintly sickening to look upon. There is a frowsiness in the dot and stipple of their line. From this point, indeed, the Monstrosities become like figures in a nightmare. It is the cloaca, the abscondita, of Hogarth and Gillray, a dwelling upon the sinister and sordid which is akin to madness, the pabulum, the common or daily meal of the satirist, when his powers are in their full flow of creation, but, in their effect, it is as the dropping of the mask. Every living figure is tainted by their madness. Not a face, but is pitted or pockmarked, all bodies are too fat or thin. In Hogarth, and in Gillray, the very dogs are deformed and starving.

Such, of course, is not the case at foot of the statue of Achilles. The Charivari of Cruikshank, under which name we might assemble together all such various satires upon fashion, could not include the hungry. They are his early ephemera drawn under the influence of Gillray, being, in part, the comments of an inhabitant of Islington or Pentonville upon the absurdities of Hyde Park. There is another of these prints, portraying the fashions of a particular year, in which the women wear ugly, barrel shaped and hunchbacked dresses, with ridiculously short skirts, hats like a shovel or a coal scuttle, nearly exposed bosoms, and are impelled by some vagary, some contagion of their senses, to wall leaning forward as though in great pain and agony. The immense hats of the later 'twenties are drawn with tiresome and exaggerated repetition, being depicted as huge straw platters tied with ribbons and heaped with fruits and flowers. This is the weakness of these caricatures. And they come towards the end of the long series. Let us look, though, at their strength. There was the epoch of the 'chapeau de paille' with wide, flopping brims. Cruikshank has drawn a group of children completely hidden under these great mushrooms they are wearing. The whole of this print billows and flops with the wide shapes. We are nearly in the land of Bosch and Brueghel. In other prints we see strange apparitions. A man dressed like a naval officer, but it is his own fantasy. He has designed it for himself. His coat has the braiding of a commander or an admiral; he wears the cocked hat; and his trousers might be the white duck trousers of the fleet worn in summer, or in southern

## *The Phantom of Lord Petersham*

waters. But it is his copious whiskers which are the mystery. For, at that time, only Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland and, later, King of Hanover, with the officers of Hussar regiments, wore those whiskers. It is this fact, and not only the scandalous incidents connected with his life, that make the Duke of Cumberland so conspicuous and sinister a figure in the prints or caricatures of his day. This crypto-naval officer, however, projects forward to the epoch of Lord Dundreary. He forecasts the fashion of the 'sixties. The ranks serving under him would, even wear the beard of the naval rating within the lifebelt upon a packet of Player's cigarettes. Another figure to attract attention must be a portrait. It is a man, thirty to forty years old, with most decided or emphatic features. He is stout and broad shouldered, and wears his top hat on the back of his head at an angle which must have been characteristic of him. He is, in fact, so accustomed to his top hat that we cannot conceive of him without it. He will have worn it indoors, in his own library, and in the diningroom of his club. In watching him, and at the thought of him without his hat, we must remember that men had only worn short hair for a very few years, by then. Before that, their hair was powdered, they wore wigs or periwigs, or the long locks of the cavaliers. He is clean shaven, we remark, and this carries him from 1826 to nearly a hundred years ahead, to the epoch that we have seen and known, ourselves. In his left hand he holds the purse or bag of the woman who is walking with him, arm-in-arm. This is shaped somewhat like a peer's coronet and is, at the same time, a money bag. The symbolism of this is too evident not to have a meaning.

Across the background, in his high curricle with a groom at the back, drives the phantom shade of Lord Petersham wearing his pink and white striped trousers, his brown coat, and his boat shaped Jewish hat, and we are to think of him—though, indeed, he is but suggested or hinted at more than drawn in full—as muttering his continual exclamations \* They come forth in a cloud

\* Viscount Petersham, b. 1780, succeeded his father as 4th Earl of Harrington, 1829, and died in 1851. He married in 1831, Maria, daughter of Samuel Foote, the famous actor. Lord Petersham was a great devotee of snuff. He must have possessed, indeed, all, and more than, those different varieties mentioned in our geography of snuff. One room in Harrington House, the old family mansion off Whitehall, was filled with shelves bearing Chinese jars of great beauty, which held the various kinds of snuff. He had, too, a collec-

## *The Phantom of Lord Petersham*

from his mouth, with a line drawn round them by the pen of the caricaturist. Some of the words are always spelt wrong, and are difficult to read. In another print, not one of the Monstrosities, we see the same person attended by his groom on foot. His appearance, in this, is almost too fantastic to be believed. The groom is, obviously, his mirror, his little idol whom he consults, and who takes messages for him. And yet, an absolutely impersonal relationship, that of someone who must argue, even if it is a monologue, before he can make up his mind. The caricaturist has built upon his eccentricity until he is so extreme a case that it is difficult to believe he has a friend. We begin to wonder if his idiosyncrasies, which are as fantastic as those of any character in Italian comedy, are not done, unconsciously, to please himself, alone. Something, it may be in the shaping of his shoulders, makes him birdlike. He is one of the family of bucerotidae, or hornbills. In looking through the plates of the monograph of that genus by D. G. Elliott, 1882, we are continually reminded of Lord Petersham. The coloured lithographs of Keulemans (for this is one of the most superb publications of its kind, apart from Gould), time after time, are reminiscent of him. It is because these most eccentric looking of all the race of birds have developed in their Bornean or Sumatran jungles a physiognomy that has its parallel in the aggressive whiskers and hooked nose of this beau of the Regency, crowned or surmounted by the horned or bony excrescence of their skulls, which has its equivalent in the cocked hat of Lord Petersham, so inveterately a part of him that he is not to be recog-

nition of snuff boxes, and it was said that he used a different box on every day of the year. Lord Petersham was, also, a great connoisseur of tea. In the same room that contained the jars of snuff were arranged tea canisters containing Congou, Pekoe, Souchong, Gunpowder, Russian and many others. This sacred room was presided over by an eccentric individual who blended the teas and prepared the snuffs for their noble owner, in fact, a sort of dispensary of tea and snuff, a private emporium into which it would be a delight to enter. The character of Lord Fitzbooby, in Disraeli's *Coningsby*, was founded upon Lord Petersham. We are told, elsewhere, that he never ventured out until after 6 p.m., that his manners were decidedly affected, and that he spoke with a kind of lisp. The style of his equipages and liveries (snuff coloured) was formed on the model of the old French noblesse. He prided himself, further more, upon his resemblance to Henri IV, his goatee beard and peculiar hat being in evidence of this. The Petersham snuff mixture and Petersham overcoat were his inventions. After his death, 2,000 lbs. of snuff from his collection realized about £1,000 at a sale in London, in July, 1851.

## *Art of the Carriage Builder*

nized without it. He is a person who, like some curious or exotic bird, could be studied a long time together in his every movement. Such specimens are the bird-actors. There is something hieratic in their resemblance to mankind. For this reason the ibis was a god in ancient Egypt. Other birds are like actors in the masks of comedy. For the mask of the comedian is never funny. It is always sinister and frightening. In the same way the bird-actors are bird-headed men. Lord Petersham is a flightless hornbill. He has lost the power of flight. This makes him, as a bird, more like a man. His staccato sentences are like a bird. They are no longer in context than the chattering of the beak. Birdlike, too, is the thinness of his waist; though it becomes, at once, unpleasant but to mention anything physical in a bird. It must have no beauty, nothing handsome but the colour of its plumes. It is two-footed; it walks upright, and in that it has resemblance to men. In more, it is evil and anthropomorphic.

The Monstrosities of Cruikshank are not all absurdity. We would suggest that the summer glitter of Hyde Park during the first half of the English or nineteenth century, in those years after the fall of Napoleon, is our only equivalent to the Prater of Vienna, to the Chiaja, the Alameda, or the gondola. Could we but follow those crowds back into their homes there would be material for many lifetimes. It will be remarked that, apart from Lord Petersham, the Monstrosities are all on foot. We are given no equestrians, no Amazons. There are none of the fashionable equipages, though the art of the carriage builder was a prerogative of London. We do not see a britschka, a light phaeton, or landaulet, nor a single curricule, nor chariot. We miss their brilliant colours and appurtenances, the yellow, scarlet lake, or green bodies of the carriages; the coats-of-arms and family mottoes, the glitter of the spokes, the harness and rosettes; waistcoats with blue and yellow stripes, driving coats of white drab cloth with fifteen capes, bouquets of myrtle and pink and yellow geraniums, 'cattle', so went the phrase, 'of a bright bay colour'. We cannot, for there is no space, pursue these noble, or plebeian origins. But, at least, we may walk in the streets and look into the shop windows.

In accordance with a part of the theory of this present book, where we deal with perfection in little, one of the first things

## *Lettering upon Shops*

noticed would be the baker's or the butcher's handcart, or, indeed, the delivery vans of haberdasher, glove seller, or any other shop, because of the style in which they were painted, and the gilt scroll and lettering upon their sides. In point of spacing and lettering that was one of the finest epochs of the printed book, and its influence can be seen in the firm, but imaginative lettering, and in the forgotten art of flourishing. That was an art of contrasts. There were ways of leaving bare of ornament the most important word in such inscriptions, and embellishing the rest. Or this principle could work by opposites, giving emphasis by means of every prolongation and intertwining of the calligrapher. Such metropolitan or urban art, the exact opposite to peasant arts and crafts, has not yet been treated with the care that it deserves. It is one of the contradictions of history that it was the aesthetic movement of the latter part of that century which brought it to destruction. In tradition, it went back to Cheapside of the time of Chaucer, had reached to perfection, we might imagine, at the end of the seventeenth century, and was in its last phase in the rebuilding of London after Waterloo. The art of the shop sign, but in its hundred divisions and ramifications it has proceeded much further than that name suggests and, in the neatness of the baker's carts, where we first meet with it, we are only at the beginning of its possibilities. That it did not advertise or pride itself as art is, perhaps, its most conspicuous charm. At the time we are speaking of, it took advantage, as we have said, of a golden age in printing. There was the fine lettering above the shop window, while it descended to small details, as in the printed wrapper. A delightful instance, which is still in commerce, is the paper wrapping of the flat, sixpenny packets of Parkinson's Doncaster butterscotch. This could not be improved upon for the spacing and set up of its lettering. We would expect to find such trifles at their best in Brighton or Cheltenham, centres, self-styled, of elegance and refinement. But they had reached, as well, to older towns, to Bath or Scarborough, while there was hardly a market or a posting town without the bow window of the chemist or the grocer with square panes and shutters, and the fanlight placed above the door.

Evidence is to be found in tradesmen's cards and billheads of the time. There were firms of engravers who specialized in these, sending round travellers to collect their orders. This was in the



### *Beauty of Engraved Billheads*

great age of the steel engravers, and these little vignettes, which approximate to the beautiful engravings upon old writing paper of the 'thirties and 'forties had died out soon after the middle of the century. Often they show the particular shop; sometimes, a whole block of Regent Street with its new buildings. Or they depict the objects sold, arranged in a trophy, and, upon occasion, engraved singly in great detail and precision. There was a speciality, even, in the engraving of the Royal arms, often with an array of banners and lances, of trumpets, drums and mortars shown behind them, and the lion and unicorn, enraged, or in defiance. Two billheads from Scarborough have the Spa bridge and the castle drawn, almost, as though it were the bay of Naples. The wine and spirit merchant, even in an inland country town, has a wharf with a sailing ship tied up beside it and a top hatted over-seeer who checks the list of casks and barrels. Or it is the port of embarkation; negroes roll the hogsheads of rum and take the planter's orders. Tea merchants had their particular style. Often it is an engraving of their premises. The firm of J. H. Tibbs (late Ireson) of Oxford Street, has sugarloaves shown in the window and an assistant in top hat and apron, with a case of tea upon his shoulder, and others standing in a pile, with the Chinese characters visible upon their sides. The Tea Exchange of Upper Parade, Leamington, is a place of enchantment. A corner shop, with a tall lamp post at the corner. The dado is an open balustrade, the cornice, below the name of the firm, a long inscription in golden Chinese characters, beneath that, high in the windows, a row of Chinese paintings, mandarins and ladies; four windows, shared between two pairs of hanging gaslights, with glass shades shaped like tulips; and, for the stock-in-trade, tall vases of porcelain and chests and cases of the different teas. Banbury and Towcester, my two local towns, had tea merchants who took their purchasers abroad with them. Their billheads have little chinoiserie scenes engraved, beside the title. In one, a pair of Celestials are upon a flowering shore. Strange palmtrees wave above them and, in the distance, a pagoda stands. Kegs and bales, marked Fine Hyson, coffee and tobacco and snuff, surround them. In the background is the ocean, and a distant sailing ship. The other billhead is a double scene; to one side, a coffee mill worked by an European; and, beside it, a group of Celestials in a kiosque, underneath a

### *Some Instances*

parasol. Below, in fading ink, is written 'two pounds of Congou tea'.

The trophies of the Royal arms, above the shops of the Royal warrant holders, were in the prime, then, of their manufacture. Those few specimens that are left us, now, are in reproach for that. It was a minor art, to itself, in which great imagination was displayed. This, too, has its obvious descent from mediæval times, with its affinities to tournament and chessboard. Many of them were masterworks of carver and gilder, subtly differenced, for instance, for the Queen-Dowager Adelaide, the Royal Dukes and Duchesses, or the Kings of Hanover or Belgium. The heraldic animals of country inns, the white or red lions, the white harts or swans, belong to the same tradition, and may have been carved and painted in the same workshops. A walk down Oxford or Regent Street, in the 'twenties or 'thirties of last century, would have shown the lion and unicorn in greater number than ever, before or since. The low buildings of Regent Street in their bright stucco, still fronted by Nash's colonnades, following the gentle curve along from Piccadilly Circus to Oxford Street, were enlivened by these carved animals and their shields of arms. In particular, there were corner buildings, at the turn of Conduit Street or Maddox Street, where Nash had employed his favourite device of a low, domed pavilion. Here, the Royal arms were set above the door, as though on guard, and, in toy fantasy, the eyes could travel but a few yards along the painted cornice to the next lion and unicorn above the near-by shop. Their wooden mediævalism, that of the painted playing card or the sham tournament, was not at variance with Nash's bastard classicism. He, too, had made his experiments in Gothic, and the sudden birth of these animals of wood and stucco, bastard descendants of the gargoyles, or of the heraldic supporters upon the pinnacles of such buildings as St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, was as though Gog and Magog, or the figure heads of shipbuilding yards, had brought their progeny and mounted them along the cornice. We could make out, too, an analogy to the canal barge, the Gypsy caravan, the roundabout of the fair ground. In every weather, in the fog and rain, these heraldic animals were part of the Charivari of the streets of London.

The passing of time, which extolled the buildings of Regent

### *Lithographs by T. S. Boys*

Street, grew indifferent, and then condemned them, is illustrated in the facility with which our eyes would seek out these details that many persons might not notice. They may be there for the eyes to see and, yet, not be seen. These are questions of emphasis, omission, or incorporation. They can be given their importance, pass unnoticed, or be compounded in the painter's or the writer's presentation. An instance is in the lithographs of Thomas Shotter Boys. There is no better known topographer of London. And Boys is more than that. He is in the tradition of Bonington. In his lithographs the whole material is worked up into the finished surface, as though, that is to say, each lithograph of the whole series had to be examined and passed for its colour, its detail, and its figures, before publication. If found unworthy, it would have been rejected. Where this painter excels is in porches and steeples of white Portland stone. His crowds, too, are in tact and harmony with his buildings. But, already, he is early Victorian. His pleasure lay in the play of light upon the architecture. It may not be too fanciful to see the white chalk hills of Kent and Surrey in the predominant candour of his scenes. The majority, in tone, are as white as the whitecoats of the old Habsburg army. White Portland stone and white chalk hills. Even his stucco buildings are more white than yellow.

But there is an artist, less well known than Boys, who gives to us the exact conspectus that we need. He follows with fidelity the every detail. And their accumulation tells us the factual truth. In his watercolour drawings we see how a London street appeared if we would study it as a traveller might look, again and again, upon a row of Oriental booths or shops. With eyes, that is to say, alive to every strangeness and unfamiliarity. All of this is set down by him because of his engagement with the truth. A person, therefore, who is without imagination; but, in the result, his surprise at every brick and stone is not less interesting than the lithographs of Boys. The painter in question is George Scharf, who was born near Munich in 1788, and died in London in 1860. He studied in Antwerp and Paris, and accompanied the Allied armies in their final campaigns against Napoleon, being occupied chiefly in painting portraits in miniature of the British officers. He arrived in London in 1816. His scrupulous draughtsmanship recommended itself to the authors of scientific and, more especially, geological



THE STRAND  
*by George Scharf*



### *George Scharf and his Drawing of the Strand*

works, with the result that his illustrations are to be found in many of the books by Professor Owen, and other scientific writers of the time. In this way he delineated the skulls and skeletons of many extinct animals found embedded in the soil or rocks, and numerous plates from his hand are to be found in the annals of the Old Geological Society. Besides this, he made large watercolour drawings, on commission, of such subjects as a sitting of Parliament, and the Lord Mayor's banquet. So far a pedestrian, more than an inspired, career. But it is precisely as a pedestrian that Scharf is of value to us. His private hobby seems to have consisted in making watercolour drawings of old London, with particular regard for beadles, night watchmen, and other vanishing figures of the past, and a special enthusiasm for old shop fronts and for the little details of costume and street architecture which would appeal to someone of foreign origin as being characteristic of his adopted capital. An enormous mass of these small drawings, amounting to several hundreds in number, were deposited by his heirs, a year or two after he had died, at the British Museum, and are to be studied in the Print Room. As documents, but in point more of painstaking detail than of character, they compare with the collection of drawings given by Constantin Guys in his old age, just before his fatal accident, to the Carnavalet Museum in Paris. Those, of course, are works of a great artist, these are topographical illustrations, but their meticulous detail amounts in the aggregate to something as typical of London as the Monstrosities of Cruikshank. His drawings of provincial towns could not, it is obvious, be as important, as his rendering of the Strand. They could but be subsidiary to the great street of London. And it so happens that one of his finest drawings is a view along the Strand.

To look at this drawing, and contemplate the possibility of walking down that Strand, is a prospect to make the mouth water. For as far as the eyes can see there are shop fronts, bow windows, every enticement that painted lettering and a pane of glass can offer. There is more to buy than in the bazaars of Damascus or Grand Cairo, under the arcades of the Palais Royal, or in the toy-shops of old Nuremburg. So let us start from Charing Cross and walk along the Strand. In the distance hangs the white dome of St. Paul's. Straight in front is Gibb's steeple of St. Mary-le-Strand, a little masterpiece of elegance and good manners, paying tribute

## *A Stroll along the Strand*

in its pagoda or pepper castor form to this mart for foreign lands, and recalling in every detail works of the silversmiths in the reigns of Charles II or Queen Anne. Behind it, must be the other church of St. Clement Danes, and were we to climb upon a roof, or mount that very tower, we would see seventy or a hundred white steeples, all of Portland stone, curving away in the distance, past St. Paul's to Greenwich, as in Canaletto's painting, where as a foreigner again he seized upon this feature of old London. They are London's minarets, in form and variety not less capricious than that name suggests. Works of an earlier age, for the Strand, as we see it this fine morning of a hundred and twenty years ago, is nearly contemporary. With few exceptions, the shops and houses date from not later than the beginning of the century. They must be modern enough to suit the requirements of business and trade. Many of them are gilded and painted to look new. But, for ourselves, they have the newness of any mediæval town, of any place intangible because of physical impossibility, be it Antioch or Ephesus, Byzantium or ancient Rome, made a living reality, and known and touched by us.

We pass by the shop of an ivory and hard wood turner and carver. He advertises chessmen, and billiard, pool, and bagatelle balls supplied, his sign, which we should find again upon his bill-head, the figure of an elephant standing in a forest clearing, with a pair of ivory tusks, lying like crossed swords, at his feet. Next door, a grocer or fancy warehouseman has in his window, English French, and Spanish chocolates; Westmoreland and Westphalian hams, Parmesan, Gruyère and Chapzugar cheeses, Dutch beef for grating, Russian and Reindeer tongues, Vermicelli and Cagliari pastes for soups. A curious mingling of past and present, for, among so much else that is familiar, what are Spanish chocolates, Chapzugar cheeses, Dutch beef for grating? After this comes an ordinary or eating house. The slate reads, 'giblet soup, roast ribs of beef, Cheddar or red Leicester cheese, cheap oysters, Colchester or Whitstable, Cornish or Dutch Zeeland, jellied or smoked eels'. Inside, there are high wooden pews, and top hats everywhere, as in an Eton class room. For we begin, now, to take notice of the crowd. Figures in black and drab and bottle green, with nankeen breeches, dressed with that contradiction which turns the townsmen of one decade into countrymen of the next

## *A Stroll along the Strand*

Outside a chemist's window it would be impossible not to linger. We read announcements of Sim's only genuine white and musk brown Windsor soap; mottled and Naples soaps, Rowland's Macassar oil, in an older packing, notices, respectfully worded, addressed to the nobility, gentry, and the clergy, calling attention to the advantages of certain preparations, composed, as it were, in a particular language, the jargon of elocutionist or dancing master. Authentic Eau de Cologne, guaranteed against imposture and pleading, vociferously, its address: 'Gegenüber dem Julichs Platz', with fulmination and threat of action against all other persons who called themselves Farina, took up the centre of one window. It is, plainly, the wrappings and labels that are the fascination.

In another window, Hannay and Dietrichsen's Fragrant essence of Rondeletia, for the toilet or handkerchief, prepared expressly for the use of the Royal Family.\* We read 'The lovers of elegant perfumes are solicited to call and try this article on their Handkerchief, for which purpose a Bottle is always open free, to which Handkerchief, so perfumed, the combined fragrance of the choicest conservatory must yield precedence. . . . Perfumers whose appearance of respectability would induce a belief that they would not sell a counterfeit article, are even guilty of this.' And we come to Hannay & Co.'s Oriental Oil 'A pure limpid white vegetable substance . . . The great care is proverbial, that is paid to the cultivation of the luxuriant tresses of the fair Captives of the Harem, and Art is there well known to succeed in outrivalling even the far-famed beauties of Circassia. The Oriental Oil, as prepared by Messrs. Hannay & Co has been employed for the purpose during the period of three centuries.' Close to it, is Gowland's Lotion 'Distinguished as a safe and congenial appendage of the toilet during a period of nearly eighty years. A copy of that popular work, "The Theory of Beauty", is enclosed with every bottle.' And there is, also, Shaw's Mindora Oil, known, too, from 1750. By its side, goods and an advertisement of Brewster's: 'Haircutter and Manufacturer of Ornamental Hair to the Royal

\* According to *The Art of Perfumery*, by G W Septimus Piesse, London, 1855, essence of Rondeletia was composed of cloves, lavender, musk, and vanilla. He suggests that its inventor took the name of this perfume from the Rondeletia, the Chyn-len of the Chinese, or from the R. Odorata of the West Indies, which has a sweet odour.



## *A Stroll along the Strand*

Family. Makes Ladies' Headdresses, Gentlemen's Perruques, Scalps, etc., of the finest natural curl. Hair distinguished from all others for their lightness, durability, and exactness in fitting. W. B. most scrupulously excludes all common hair from his house, and being the greatest buyer of that of the first quality, he can always ensure such a supply as cannot be had in any other house. Brewster's Almond and Honey Soap, combining the emollient and balsamic properties of the honey with the finest Almond Oil soap. Sold in squares, at a shilling each. The only house in London where Chardan Houbigant's Pâté d'Amande au Miel can be had as imported. And, in a corner, next to Rowland's Kalydor, Rowland's Essence of Tyre, for changing red and grey whiskers to black or brown. We pass on, and come to the Maison de Deuil: 'Mourning Furnisher by appointment to the King, H R.H. the Duchess of Gloucester, H R.H. the Duchess of Kent, H R H the Duchess of Cambridge, and the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburgh Strelitz.' 'Mr Pugh', we read, 'takes pleasure in introducing to his numerous patrons and the public his highly approved materials for Family Mourning, the Royal Bombazin Cloth, and Amphomoion or Widow's silk, to be had only at his house. Widow's Mourning in a hitherto unknown variety. Mourning costume, Pelisses, Paletots, Polish Mantles and Cloaks, in velvet, satin, glacé, gros royal, moiré, and other silks, in every variety.' And, close to this, the next window has a label, 'Mock Turtle always ready.'

This prospect of the Strand, seen not in detail but in all its length, is a wonderful and a characteristic vision. We would like the enlargement of it upon the curtain or backcloth of a theatre. So many dramas could be played in front of it, Dan Leno or Little Tich equally with Shakespeare or Ben Jonson. For many reasons. Because anything, so exactly dated, is true to all time, and for the vast human history of this thoroughfare and parallel to old Thames. It is East to West of London, and includes it all. But, looked upon without regard to this, simply for its appearance to the eyes, with no thought for its purpose or its meaning, the shops and houses are in simile the bows or stern galleys of many ships tied side by side; an endless collection of bow windows looking upon the sea, ghosts, therefore, of seaside terraces and parades; temples of Aesculapius, with magic waters of the alchemist in

## *A Stroll along the Strand*

great glass jars and cruchons in the windows; altars of the green turtle, where it was brought alive and slain; counters loaded with the golden saps of sugarcanes; the white sugarloaf, in sign and emblem, in reminder of gaiters and pipeclay and the moustachio'd grenadiers, Tegg's printshop and the colourists at work; a tea and coffee warehouse, terminus of the green tea hulls, the seedsman with a window of bright seed packets, the painted carnation and the picotee, a baker's shop with, at back, the dusty clowns or scullions of the oven, mercers and haberdashers who had slaves of the needle working for them in the slums, elegant establishments where there was not heard the weeping of the children, the clock-shop and its traps for time, the funeral furnisher, sugar cakes for weddings and baptisms, the tallow chandler, the shop of the East Indiaman, with clothes to take out to India and Madeira and curries for the traveller returned, on and on, until we get to Ludgate Hill and, climbing that, see the spire of St. Martin, Ludgate, giving measure and proportion to the dome of St. Paul's. We are in Fleet Street, in Grub Street, and it is before the stamping of the presses. No one's ruin is called out on the hoardings. It has not come to this: the balloons of the barrage have not risen over greater London. And we come back along the Strand of shops and warehouses.

The curious part of this perambulation, if we would have the experience with our own eyes and senses and not surrender into another time, has the effect, precisely, of poverty among so many riches. We may go where we will, and look into the windows, but we have no money in our pockets. We are as the children who gnaw a crust of bread and pass along the gutter. Our translation from this time into that other could be effected no more simply than by making a purchase and having it handed, wrapped, or in a parcel, across the counter. There would be a touch of hands, a communion or sacrament, and such contact, perfunctory and superficial, would be all we needed. We long, even, for a thing so trivial as the folding of the paper and the knotting of the string. To watch the packet being sealed, and the sealing-wax held into the flame. To ask the shopkeeper for a simple direction and be told how many doors away, up or down the Strand. And, stepping down into the street, to have living persons brush against us, hear their voices, and stand still for a moment, at a corner, to listen to the hurdygurdy.

## *Street Music*

Nol we cannot buy: we are penniless and wandering. We can look into the shopwindows: but we dare not enter. Another street musician is standing in the gutter. A little Savoyard, with an old barrel organ strapped round him, of which he grinds and grinds the handle a dwarf, or an ugly child, with nothing of the child about him: with a mouth that only gnaws or snarls: never his mother's darling, but kicked into the world to bring back half-pennies with a hired organ. He wears a little peaked hat, the hat of a Calabrian brigand, of Masaniello, and boots and trousers that are too big for him. This child has known the secrets of his parents since the day that he was born. There has been no privacy for him. He has the cleverness of a little mongrel cur, to pick up crusts and dodge the traffic. We wonder to what dark den he creeps to sleep. As for the hurdygurdy, it is played by a pigtailed sailor with a wooden stump. His trousers, bell-bottomed, are of white canvas, and he has a wide brimmed hat; he is swarthy and bearded, and cannot read or write. His heavy build is that of a picador, who rides out to the bull upon a starving nag and is lifted, horse and all, and thrown back against the barrier. Here there is no bullring, but there is much of the bull about this burly hurdygurdy man. Such are the persons with whom our lot would be thrown were we to stay here until the gaslit dark. There are so many beggars and ragged children, with frayed ends to their trousers like a torn and ragged cuff. Who has ever seen a beggar in a top hat? We shall know, presently, that he may not be the strangest of his brethren. For, in an age when all men were top-hatted, there is nothing peculiar in this. It is not his top hat, what is frightful is the condition of it, as though it had been found floating, face downwards, in the river Styx after being worn at many funerals in fog and rain. The women beggars are, perhaps, more fearful still, but, if the finery of one generation becomes the garb of old landladies and charwomen in the next, in example of which are to be noticed, even now, the black mantles and bonnets of the 'sixties worn in the back streets of great cities, it may be imagined how the beggar women wore the rags and tatters of the age of coal. We hear cracked voices singing, and watch the slow walk that we know so well, looking up from the gutter into the windows of the houses and listening for the falling of a copper coin. We might think, with a swarming population, that this was but the beginning of

## *Marionettes of Mice*

their miseries, which were to last for another hundred years until the age of coal was dead. That has happened. But, now, the sky above the cities is black, again, with clouds.

The shopkeepers, meanwhile, would be in their back parlours drinking sherry. It is the arts of the shipbuilder and the fairground that have raised them to comfort. Or we see in those arts, still living, as to one of them, their descent or perversion into special purposes. And we pass, at that moment, by a toyshop. It is their world in little, not in literal copy, but for the flight and fantasy of their imaginations. The faces of the dolls have an especial horror and repulsion, and there are musical boxes with dancing or moving figures that are part of them. One, in particular, has a little dining-table set with little dishes, with little figures sitting in their chairs round the table, their heads being formed like mice—or could they be real mice?—who move their hands and roll their beady eyes to music. They make a clatter, too, and lift their knives and forks. They are dressed in shawls and bonnets, or wear tailcoats. One, indeed, is a soldier, and, another, a mouse notary. What can their bodies be underneath their clothes? An ordinary doll's body, wired and articulated in order to improve it from a mere image into an automaton that moves. For not only do they raise their knives and forks but they turn from side to side as though dancing in their chairs, becoming more staccato as the music finishes, and the mouse notary is left looking up, with his knife and fork held high into the air. Their heads are, certainly, the heads of mice, treated by the taxidermist and given back their beady eyes, then sewed on to the doll's body, a little mouse homunculus, a little mouseheaded man or woman, with mouse hair brushed and treated and mouse whiskers glued on, one by one. Somebody will buy this and, years later, it will be found in the lumber room, where the hands that played with it will scarce dare to touch it. The dolls' heads made of china are repellent, too, never the right size, but with the horror of nanization, the midget freakishness, even in proportion to their build. They have the cretinous, the goutrous stare, dolts of the mountains, from Aosta or Courmayeur. There are, also, of course, painted hoops and painted carts, toy soldiers, glass ships in bottles, windmills, model shops, even a toyshop. It is the land of red cheeks, marionettes in wood, wax dolls and wooden dolls: bells and hearts and cradles.

## *The Cat's-meat Shop*

Just round the corner there is the cat's meat shop. The peculiarity of this shop is the lowness of its ceiling. It is necessary for a person of medium height to stand upon the pavement outside and lower his head in order to look down into it. The beams are, then, upon a level with his shoulders. It might have been built, in fact, especially for its purpose. The inscription reads: 'Cats and Dogs meat supplied daily at the lowest prices.' Other painted sentences are nearly, if not quite, illegible, for no fresh paint has touched this dwarfish building. The interior walls are pasted with cheap prints of pugilists, as though this low den was a resort of the 'fancy'. But, after all, it is a meatshop, and meat means flesh and blood. Kept, therefore, by someone with a masculine taste, with a taste, we mean, in men, for these are boxers, they are not actresses or ballet dancers. Nor is it mere sport. There are no horses and no jockeys. It is flesh and blood and blood-letting: the 'tapping of the claret', as they would say, themselves. Someone who likes muscle and is not put off by bruises. A meat eater, theirselves, of course, who does not want their meat too browned. Someone who knows the slang and knows the diet and training: who can make poultices and put raw beef upon black eyes. At the same time, a friendly little den with something of the oyster bar, somewhere to drop into, shaking the raindrops off your coat, and sit upon a stool, close up to the rail. Somewhere to find warmth and congenial company. Often we have passed outside the cat's meat shop, and once, once only, seen the owner. For, in spite of the invitation, no squeamish person would step inside. The proprietress is a fat woman of sixty or sixty-five, dressed in seedy and stained black, with a grey woollen shawl, and a man's flat cap upon her head. A woman who might be a midwife, a costerwife, or huckstress, owner of a fish stall, who sells jellied eels. But the oil cloth counter has upon it piles of offal, as to the nature of which, or the internal geography, we are not competent to tell. Soiled newspapers are there for wrapping; and there are strips and scraps that have been cooked, but are green as though with mildew, or have a milky iridescence shining from them. They must be horse-flesh from a slum stable, slaughtered before the mare falls down dead between the shafts. Close to this is battered pair of scales, for fair measure to the purchaser. And there is fish for the cat. A

## *The Cat's-meat Shop*

tin plate of cod's heads, and bits of fish with the black skin clinging to them for dainty.

At six o'clock in the morning, or late at night, this woman goes to the slaughterhouse door, and to the fish stalls. She buys a few pennyworth of offal and in the fish stalls, from long custom, is allowed to look into the pails and buckets, hand picking what she wants to take away with her. We have walked past her shop and seen another woman, on her hands and knees, swabbing the soiled floor. A thin woman dressed in black, whose face we did not see, the servant or charwoman of the establishment, living, we might think, on dregs of beer and cups of tea in the back room, for even she could not eat the cooked meat on the counter. Whence comes, then, the sporting atmosphere and the prints of boxers? It is a mystery. Had the owner's husband been a pugilist? A butcher whose hobby was blood sports? A slaughterman with strong arms from wielding the pole-axe? Every butcher's shop has the butcher's cat to it. And there is a cat in every fish shop. It was, perhaps, in this way that she became familiar with cats. For it is cat's meat more than dog's meat. And, to some persons it will be more unpleasant for that reason. It is the lean cat's meat shop, but that does not explain the prints of boxers. No more, perhaps, than the fantasy of a mind that could not write or read: the same spirit that loves windowboxes and will grow red geraniums at a window in a slum street, that would have pictures of the sea, on land, and, in a cabin, pictures of the green fields and the harvest. Yet there must be a more direct link than this. Is she a widow with an only son, who died, and was a pugilist? Did the 'fancy' set her up and buy the cat's meat shop for her? And, at this moment, a slum woman goes into the shop and comes out, after a time, with a penny bundle wrapped in newspaper. She is taking home meat for her cat. Twice a week she comes to buy it.

Now there is no one to whom the thought of a cat drinking milk could be horrible; but it is different with meat. If a cat licks your hand, is not your hair inclined to stand on end? Its tongue is warm and prickly: you must look down to be sure of what is happening. For it is something serpentine or reptilian. It is not friendly, like a dog's tongue when it licks your face or hand. It is unpleasant and insinuating: not warmblooded, neither hot nor cold, but apt to cause a shiver, indeed, intent on that, for it will

## *The Cat's-meat Shop*

take advantage. It knows, by instinct, those persons it can terrorize. And, if it be affectionate, we know the cat's amours end in pain and wailing. The thought, then, of when a cat eats meat is horrible, not only because of the vile offal that is given to it, but, also, by reason of some feline creepiness in its approach to meat, some link with the tiger and the panther. The man-eating tiger poisons with its fangs. You get blood poisoning from its teeth and claws. And, when a cat eats meat, we must think of the mouse. The caresses of the cat's tongue might lull it into sleep. As a toy, it has such a gentle child to play with it. Never a broken bone; and scarce a scratch but, always, the sharp points of the claws. Mouse or sparrow are as though loved by it. They are silky balls playing with that velvet hand. There is always the parable of a drowned cat whenever a cat is eating fish, for the fish was safe, once, in its clement. This is its degradation, but the tyrant, too, can be humiliated, can float like a knotted rag upon the river or in the harbour. The slum cats who are fed from the cat's meat shop, and are lucky in that, we are bound to think more horrible than the Persian or Angora. Is the slum mouse more horrid than the mouse of church or palace? We would answer that no sight in London is more sordid than the cat's meat shop. It is worse than the charnel house, for its purpose is to feed an animal that is alive, that lives in our rooms with us and is our plaything. When a town has been destroyed by earthquake, or by bombardment, when the plague is rife in it, starving cats are the only creatures stirring in the streets. But, if they devoured what they could find, it would not be more horrible than the dainties on this counter.

We come back, again, to the painted shops and houses. For, of all the inventions of England, there is none with more character than the bow window. It has the build of the figures in a Rowlandson drawing, whether nymphs or waggoners, the alehouse keeper or the Wapping sailor. The great bow window of the Ship Inn at Greenwich, the whole width of the room from floor to ceiling, like a bow window in Venice, the palace of white Portland stone, as white as the Istrian, but a foot or two away, confounding the Adriatic with the estuary of Thames. This bow window could be the stern galley of a vessel tied up to the quay, if it were not for the white walls and white ceiling on which the reflections play. On rainy days it is the river of Dickens. Who is there who has not

## *Bow Windows*

eaten whitebait in this diningroom? For, here, the fish dinners of Greenwich were served, and now it is the studio of a painter. The bow windows of Clovelly or of Robin Hood's Bay, the one, hung with fuchsias, the other, giving on the cliff where jet was found. The bow window of a village shop, in any village, under a thatched roof, where jasmine and honeysuckle are entwined and lilies and clematis are growing. The bow window of Mr Pollock's Juvenile and Theatrical Toy Warehouse, down in Hoxton, with spangled prints and miniature theatres hanging in the window. The bow windows of parades and terraces, each whole house bow windowed, with that odd effect, as in the squares of Brighton, that each building is a microcosm of the human race, that the garden in the square may be yellow with laburnum, and that the fourth or open end of this enclosure is the ocean with its limitless horizon. The bow windows upon the cliffs, where the air smells of clover in the summer, looking down upon the sea; but, all the winter there is the rattling of window panes. Bow windows of the Monstrosities, taking us into the homes of everyone of them. An art which we should have studied at Weymouth or at Brighton, and that has its culmination in the seaside pier. It has no equivalent in other lands, but like the parade or the circus is only found in England. The one exception is the town of Hanover, owing to its connecting links with England, and here an architect whose name I have forgotten built houses, between 1820 and 1840, overlooking a public garden and near the long avenue that led to Herrenhausen, with bow windows and caryatids in a classical version of the English style. We may think, there, that the Duke of Cumberland drove past, become Ernst August and King of Hanover on the death of his brother William IV, his equipage being one of the splendid carriages from Herrenhausen, perhaps the closed Berlin painted maroon with the Royal arms upon it, his outriders wearing the Royal livery of England, and drawn by the cream Hanoverian ponies. We see his red face and choleric whiskers and his blank blue eyes of race. That same Duke of Cumberland who is familiar from the London caricatures. The bow window, in intention and origin was a sunparlour. It was to trap the sunlight. A purpose that gives it pathos in the pall of smoke.

For let that, now, descend and we have the London fog. In looking at Scharf's drawing of the Strand, which has inspired us,



## *Stage Door*

we must realize on how many days and nights we would see no more than a house or two at a time. No other phenomenon could give the size of London. And, on a foggy evening, let us stop outside the back door of a theatre. Near the Strand off Drury Lane, near Covent Garden, names called out by the 'bus conductor, and known to the hundred million in a hundred years. Come, stand at the door, and look inside! It is a huge black pit or cavern with its height nearly hidden in the fog. Its walls are of sooty brick, the brick of backwards and dark alleys. You must not touch them, for they will stain the hands. There are ladders and stairways that lead to upper dungeons. For this, in one sense, is a nightmare prison, the Carceri of Piranesi, but without his chains and fetters. The nightmare of the pre-natal, the imprisonment in the womb, in some mine or cavern deep into the earth.

The stage of the theatre is invisible. It corresponds, in this vision, to birth into the world. At present, there is no sign of that. It is only the arrival of new scenery, for a new play is in rehearsal. The paint is still wet upon the canvas. But this is our opportunity, the moment of our flight or levitation, for it is the transformation scene. In fact, the Christmas pantomime, and the month of December, near the shortest day. Having begun the Charivari upon a day of dark depression, mingling in this false summer with those summer crowds, we have walked in search of character to the end of the seasons and to the far end of the town. Harlequin must touch us with his wand and the transformation will begin. Were there wings upon his heels and a pair of wings upon his hat he would be Mercury, the winged messenger. Mercury, or Hermes, which you will, was presented by the King of heaven with a winged cap called petasus, and with wings for his feet called talaria. With these he was enabled to go into whatever part of the universe he pleased with the greatest celerity, and besides he was permitted to make himself invisible, and to assume whatever shape he pleased. Thus far, Dr Lemprière;\* but we will go much further.

For a moment, though, let us come upon the stage. And who do we find leaning with her back against the scene? This is the farewell, and we will never see her form again. Balancing on one foot, she puts the point of the other into a tray of sand, and rubs and preens it on the wooden boards. And, for an instant of time,

\* From Pembroke College, Oxford, in November 1788

## *Harlequin and his Bat*

we see her in a different light, that of the evil smelling acetylene flare. It is midnight. The performance is just over. There is a table, on trestles, and the chairs are a drum, or the corner of a packing case. In fact, we see them sitting at their supper. And when a Comedian takes off his mask his hair is ruffled. They have shorter hair than the fashion of their day, and it falls upon their foreheads in Napoleonic locks, as though the winds of revolution had blown upon them. Their whole character has been in ferocious fantasy or satire, and now, in repose, and in a life that is so poor that it has no privacy, this is a meeting of demagogues who are resting from the crowd. In no sense are they entertainers of the public. It is not entertainment, but a whipping up of hostility and hatred. Such comedy was never invented for the affections of its audience. They are always sinister, or avaricious, or peculiar in brain.

Take a last look at them! Where is Francischina's goose's wing, that she should sweep the floor before us? Who, then, are Cucurucu and Razzullo, Capitan Bombardon and Capitan Zerbino? They have their identity. Or are they but actors? And, if actors, they are painters, poets, or musicians: all who are tired by creation and have no life of their own. Such dancers as Capitan Bombardon and Capitan Grillo have never danced again. Look at their hands and feet, and the pointed noses of their masks! The dragged feathers in the cap of Capitan Grillo are his person and his movements, mimicked. This extraordinary pair are executing a dance which, somehow, is decidedly obscene in effect. It is a dance of two nightmare dogs, in one of those rare dreams in which the exact resemblance is forgotten and cannot be requisitioned out of memory, and a sort of substitute or parody appears for it. In this dream, a dog, yes! even the form of a dog, cannot be called to mind. Instead, there is this terrible invention in duplicate, or rather, in alternation. They are human in shape, but doglike in movement, trained to their hindlegs, and dancing in horrible courtship, diseased and degraded like dogs of the gutter. It is a frenzy of hopping and scratching, with those quick turns that give the only comedy of the scene. It is the theatre and the dance in an inch or two of space. That is why Capitan Bombardon and Capitan Grillo have never danced again. They are still dancing, like the others of their company.

We would continue. Here is the din of market stalls. High walls

## *Balli di Sfessania*

of white, or staining stucco, with doorways that smell of wine and olive oil and salami. We may see, if we would imagine it, the slanting sun upon the yellow streets. Milk white oxen, their horns garlanded with flowers, blue grapes in their tumbrils; the forms of amphora, of fiasco, and of wine jar, the trellised vine. For the season is autumn. The harvest has been taken in. Now the turn of the grapes has come.

They are dancing, we see at once, to practically no music. And, in fact, at that time, the primitive age of music, there could be no airs quick or sinuous enough to accompany their dances. All they could achieve was a rhythm, which they doubled or increased in time, music of the fanfare or the drum roll, no different from that of the mountebank, the herald, or the public execution. It called the citizens into the piazza, and may have had little that was appropriate or fantastic in its sound. Yet, we remember that trumpet call in the winter streets, and at the Castillo di Bibataubin, and cannot be so sure of this. When we think of the Italian genius, then falling from its prime, there can be no certainty. By the simplest of methods, the musicians of the streets may have produced just those effects that would seem impossible. Who, indeed, can have any doubt of this? As we look at each pair of dancers, their tunes are in our head. And, not always, tunes, but the strumming of guitars, the crashing of the tambourine, drum taps that gave the notation, the pattern of their steps, while each sequence by endless repetition brought its ghost alive. Sometimes, there are other figures dancing far away, at the other end as it might be, of the piazza, men are walking upon stilts, while they play their mandolines, or tumblers and acrobats are performing. Spectators are watching them, with a gallant or two wearing the Spanish cloak of the day, peasants go past with their loaded mules, and the houses are those of Empoli or Prato, of any Tuscan town. It is the same place, same time, same company.

These are the *Balli di Sfessania* by Jacques Callot, 1621, in a little oblong volume no larger than a diary or a note book, but bound in old red leather. The *Balli di Sfessania* meaning dances of Fescennia, Fescennine dances, a name deriving from the town in ancient Etruria where dances were performed that, in the end, were proscribed by Augustus as being of immoral tendency. Their season was the harvest homing. Callot had first come into Italy

## *Balli di Sfessania*

from Lorraine with a company of Gypsies, when thirteen or fourteen years old. He was sent back to his family in Nancy, but returned again when nineteen years old, leaving Italy, for good, ten years later. His Italian experiences were all before his thirtieth year. He will have done such drawings under the immediate excitement of what he saw before him. And this thought will bring us nearer to the Italian comedians than we could ever have dreamed. This was his process. It can be known from first sketches that are still preserved. The artist made a great number of preliminary studies, many figures to one sheet of paper, drawn with the reed pen, even smaller in scale than the finished woodcuts, not higher, indeed, than the proverbial thumbnail, and reduced for this to the simplest of outlines. They have nearly the character of little stencils and could, upon a larger scale, be cut out for manipulation, like puppets of the shadow plays. Arranged in their rows upon the sheet of paper they are like the ranks of toy soldiers in a cardboard box, each one pinned down at regular interval from each other. There is the feeling that each could be taken out, turned round, put back again. But their especial fascination lies in the skill with which they have been drawn for translation into woodcut. The line exactly corresponds to the hatching of the graver. They are executed in broad strokes that are, precisely, the incision of a knife blade upon wood. The cuts of the knife, even, are closed up, but with slightly swollen edges. It would be possible to open and thicken them again with the sharp point of the blade. Because of this, like the original sketches, they give the effect of speed and inspiration. No long time, a few weeks or a month or two, can have elapsed between the first thought of them and their finished form. The drawings had, as we have explained, to be somewhat magnified in size when they were cut upon the wood, doubled, in fact, or even trebled in scale. Also, the background was put in, and this, in itself, is unlike nearly all else in the art of the theatre, for these were comedies of the open air. Coming just before the greatest age of scene painting and scenic construction, the age of the Bibiena, these had no scenery at all. Callot knew the character of the little towns and their inhabitants. He shows the penny theatre in a penny print. The place, in these wood cuts, is nowhere in particular, just any Tuscan town.

Scaramuccia and Fracasso, who have been sitting at a table

## *Farewell to Cinderella*

begin their evening preparations. The pair who are fastening their masks are Scapino and Capitan Zerbino. Gian Farina is slowly, and with difficulty, writing out a letter. Cucurucu and Razullo are finishing their supper. Capitan Bombardon and Capitan Grillo, leaders of the troupe, seem to be talking of their plans. Isabella, or Francischina, comes down from her lodging. When Callot drew these comedians, it was in the lifetime of Shakespeare. This knowledge must always come as an extraordinary surprise, so forward are the shadows that they cast. They will have been at work before *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* were written. They could have performed in any play of Shakespeare's, in which there were interludes of music or of dancing. And yet their shadow falls forward to the immortal Gilles of Watteau!

Who is this that sweeps the floor before us? It is Isabella, Francischina, Cinderella with her goose's wing. That comes into her play or pantomime and, meanwhile, she leans with her back against the painted scene. In a white ballet skirt, and with her hair hidden in a net or turban. It is a pause or interlude in the rehearsal, but her face is already painted for the lights. This gives her a hieratic air, like a painted priestess or an idol, contradicted in a fantastic manner when she smiles.

It is Colombina, the Columbine of the poets, the ghost of the well head, the circus acrobat; the little bayadère. Also, the person of the convent and the boarding school. Cinderella, holding the point of her shoe into the tray of sand. Cinderella dressed for the glass coach and the ballroom. How neuter and how curious, and how much the dancer, with her hair screwed up and hidden in that black bandana, with a black woollen pullover, and only her white skirt and her painted face to show! Also, her dancer's dress reveals all the grace and lightness that is her's, made more human by the handkerchief or turban that she is wearing, in place of a ballerina's diadem or tiara. Our last sight of her is in the light of all the lamps, like a goddess in a nimbus, but smiling, as though we were to meet upon the morrow.

But where is Mercury, or Harlequin? Did I not feel the touch of his wand, or bat, upon my shoulder? Did he not tell me that we could make ourselves invisible: that we could travel into whatever part of the universe we pleased? It is our farewell to her in the half-world of the theatre. The end of the Charivari, and the curtain falls.

*Book VII*

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK





## *Beggar on Horseback*

**I** have long had among my major projects that of writing a history and a handbook of beggars. If circumstances have, as yet, postponed this the ambition will not be spoiled by the coming episode. This, in its implications, is a link in a different chain. Neither will it suffer by some statement of its principles. In order to exploit that scheme no pains must be spared to produce the rare and curious. Their ranks must be assembled from all quarters and from every clime. They pour in, on foot, from round the corner, or maybe whole months upon the road. For this is more than a mere philosophy of the picturesque. It is proverb and paradox justified and explained. This is the key to eccentricity not less of a wonder than the interpreting of your dreams. Being so near to the earth it is open to the skies. There is no such close ascent into the metaphysical. It is but a step from the tramp's idyll to the greater mysteries. Many types of mendicancy are so near to inspiration. We find among them the clown and the saviour: the poet or the satyr, young or old. There are idylls worthy of tapestry, to be painted with the needle, the heartbreak under the railway arch, wild, firelight scenes, the bacchanalia of the garbage heap. From all, or any one of those, we can ascend into its equivalent. It is the mirror or pattern book to humanity. There is nothing wanting.

It has its Kings and golden caciques. At this moment, and while that other work prepares, we will draw from it only such scenes as are expedient. And we begin with this instance: 'To an European, the most remarkable of the mendicant fraternity is a Beggar on Horseback. There are several here, and the most notorious of them, who always rides a white horse, is chosen as the subject of our sketch. This fellow has some bread tied up in an old poncho at his saddle bow, some beef behind him, and beside it some candles, all of which have been given to him by good Christians—"for the love of God." Possessing in these articles all the neces-



## *Beggar on Horseback*

series of life, he is now begging for a real (sixpence) to buy some canna (raw spirit) as a luxury. His manner is essentially different from that of the true object of charity. He accosts you with assurance and a roguish smile; jokes on the leanness of his horse which, he says, is too old to walk, hopes for your compassion, and wishes you may live a thousand years. His station is outside the Colegio, formerly the Jesuit's College, to which is attached one of the best churches in the city.' We quote from E. E. Vidal: *Picturesque Illustrations of Buenos Ayres and Montevideo* (1820), a book with splendid plates in aquatint. The proving of this proverb is more easy than the paradox explained. In that land of the pampas and the cattle plains, a horse, individually, was not so valuable as the wheeled chair of the cripple, or of the blind man selling matches in the street to-day. The organ grinder has a pony or donkey to draw his instrument along. He, at least, though, is peddling his cheap music and must move from place to place. He has not the effrontery only to beg and offer nothing in return. In order to do that you must be poorer and more humble than those who pass you by. There are Gypsies in motor cars, but no Gypsy would presume to beg from one. Beggars may own motor cars and drive into the town, but they keep that secret. In the age when Kings and Emperors could but ride upon a horse, for a beggar to be on horseback was insolence and chicanery. More particularly at the church door, where he should be whining in the dust. He is a mounted sentinel posted at the door. Who would expect to see a Beggar on Horseback on duty, like the Horse Guards in Whitehall, coming and going as it pleased him and favouring a siesta?

This beggar, when we examine him closely, is ragged more from carelessness than poverty. His rags, even, have the look of being patched together when another length of cloth was at hand. He is ragged from principle, but it is an anomaly to see his rags and tatters riding on a white horse. In the same book from which we quote there is a print of the Gauchos, cowboys of the pampas, who resemble him in face and form, bearded men with long hair and the round face of the tramp, like the mask of Mezzetin. Descendants of the peons of Spain, living by that time for three centuries in the lonely pampas, they had developed into Cossacks of the Southern hemisphere, cattlemen and slaughterers, with the appearance and physiognomy, precisely, of tramps on horseback.



BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK



## *Centaurs at the Forge*

They were, too, tramps in gowns, for their dress consisted in a short, illfitting sack or blanket of striped material, red, blue, and white, which was woven by their women and was peculiar to them. It will have been in another province, Entre Rios, that they wore the red cloaks and the Gaucho costume of tradition, which was red in every particular. There is no mention of that in these pages. Their gowns are striped. Long ago they have lost all resemblance to the peons of Estremadura or Castile. They have conformed to the new environment, to the pampas plains and the Southern starlight. We do not know how much of Spain survives in their music and their ballads, but it will have been greatly differed in this world without an end.

We would guess that this Beggar on Horseback has their blood in him. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. He has come to town and is a renegade. He is too old to throw the lasso, or to rope a steer. Yet, not too old, but he has lived too long in towns. Where is his stable? He must tether his horse in a corner and sleep in an old yard. There must be nights when the Beggars on Horseback meet together, for 'there are several here', when there is a clatter of horses' hooves and they ride into the court. We could think they were Centaurs coming to the forge. It is a surprise to hear the tongue of the Spaniard spoken from their mouths.

Their unshaven faces give to them the Socratic air. It has been remarked before that the features of Socrates were those of the tramp and of the Centaur. To these, we add in Mezzetin, for his forehead, his snub, Socratic nose, his curly beard. The mask, like all other masks, is black, from tradition, and of substance. Indeed, a white masqued Mezzetin would be a new invention and might, at one time, have inspired a school of painters and of poets. Janus-like, he could be parti-coloured as to his mask, and be the god of Comedy for day and night. We could see him, white masqued, under the moonlit elms, by the clipped hornbeam, by the white currant bushes. For, being a domestic person, though uncouth, we find him, not only in the formal park but in the kitchen garden, near to the netted fruit and the espaliers. All this, of course, in Utopia, in a lunar paradise, or upon the stage. Never in life.

But we come back to Socrates and the Centaur. Socrates, when young and unshaven, when his beard was black, will have been the tramp philosopher, in physiognomy. We all know the tramps

## *The Centaur Chiron*

who have black curly beards and black curls upon their foreheads, from neglect of the razor and the scissors. It is the type, too, of the poet Verlaine. He might so well have been the Centaur Chiron, tutor of the heroes, who taught Achilles, Hercules, and Aesculapius, instructing them in the polite arts, in medicine, and in the chiming of the numbers. Verlaine, in fact, and for reasons into which we do not enter, was almost too well suited for the task of pedagogue, reasons which are illustrated in the epigrams of Meleager, and which would have appealed to the Mousa Paidike of Strato. In his features we find the Centaur and the tramp. No less than Socrates, Verlaine is the type of both. Of Socrates it was written 'He was naturally of a licentious disposition, and a physiognomist observed in looking in the face of the philosopher that his heart was the most depraved, immodest, and corrupted that ever was in the human breast.' The same thing, it will be agreed, could be said of Verlaine. That, in the case of Socrates and of Verlaine, it was redeemed by genius, has its counterpart in the other countenance of Janus. One is the mask, and the other is the face. But, not both are the true picture of a human soul. It is not without cause that the faces of the Centaurs are always of this type. The most animal of men were called for in the legend. They must be wise and learned, of the canon of Diogenes, who boasted of his poverty. We may think that this most famous of the Cynics will have formed himself, physically, on the Socratic model. 'The life of Diogenes', we are told, 'shrinks from the eye of a strict examination, he was so arrogant that many have observed that the virtues of Diogenes arose from pride and vanity, not from wisdom or sound philosophy. His morals were corrupted, and he gave way to the most vicious indulgencies, and his unbounded wantonness has given occasion to some to observe, that the bottom of his tub would not bear too close an examination.' In short, another of the tramp philosophers. It is no more remarkable to beg from horseback than to make your home in an old tub, which served him as a house and a place of repose! He even walked about the streets of Athens with the barrel on his head. The story is well-known of the visit paid to him by Alexander. He asked Diogenes if there was anything in which he could gratify or oblige him. 'Get out of my sunshine' was the Cynic's answer. We can read from this, either that Diogenes was a beggar born, or else that he

## *Tolstoy as Tramp Philosopher*

had so sunk himself into his rôle that it had become his nature. Upon such an occasion a King of the beggars would not condescend to beg. He would know that more was expected of him.

The insolence of the lazzaroni is in the retort made by Diogenes. But, as to his own status among them, Diogenes was of that sort who are learned, lazy, and vicious by propensity. The Southern indolence was in his blood, though, also, his type of scholar who refuses work and prefers destitution is so universal as to be found, as well, upon the benches of the Thames Embankment, where that small population who live and sleep outdoors are certain, always, to include a scholar or a schoolmaster, someone who can quote Greek poetry, and whom Bacchus or more doubtful gods have suborned in life. But it approaches, too, to the Slav races. It is in their abnegation, their nihilism, in that facet, only, of the Greek mind, in a phase of their philosophy when it explored in every direction, and never in their arts or in the works of their hands, that the Slav soul, and it is soul, more than heart or brain, approaches to the Greek. Not without its explanation from this point of view is the fact that the Russian Nihilists of the 'seventies and 'eighties, who assassinated the Czar Alexander II, liberator of the serfs, and who prepared the Revolution of to-day, were drawn from the educated and official classes, and included, as an instance of our argument, the young daughter of the military governor of Moscow among the most dangerous of their conspirators. The whole career of Count Tolstoy, culminating in his symbolic flight into the snow a few days before he died, and which portended his flight from his family, his fame and fortune, and, above all, from himself, is the complete illustration of this thesis. For many years Tolstoy had worn the dress of a moujik, and grown his beard so as to have the appearance of a peasant. In symbol, he had abandoned everything and was taking refuge with the tillers of the soil. Their ox-like mass remained indifferent to him; and, in their turn, the Revolution has massacred and transplanted them. The factory workers read him in cheap editions, and wonder at his deflection, for the peasants were as ignorant and hopeless as the priests. And, in the end, Tolstoy remains Count Tolstoy, with a small birthright that could be neither sold nor given in exchange. Such instances could be multiplied from Russian history. It may be that the Eastern Church, with its tradition of Kings and princes

## *A Snubnosed Regiment*

who abdicated and became hermits, may have had a share in this. So many of the Comnenoi, and other Byzantine dynasties, came to end their lives upon Mount Athos, of voluntary or enforced design, conveyed there by their rivals. A thousand years of this tradition had descended from Byzantium to Moscow. The Slav soul has a love for abstract argument that it has inherited from this, for discussion upon points of dogma; and for revolutionary originalities in absolute reversal or upheaval of the accepted canon. Endless talkers, like Athenians of the sacred groves, or of the modern cafés. It is our opinion that anyone who saw in the flesh the philosophers, Socrates or Diogenes, and the poet Verlaine, would comment upon their Kalmuck, or their Tartar air. They were Satyrs or Centaurs of their Attic race. And we part from the Slavs with no more than a mention of the regiment of the Pavlovsk Guards, instituted by the insane Czar Paul I, and confined to men with snub noses like their master, which portion of the old Russian Imperial Guard continued, with that restriction, until 1917.

That snubnosed regiment is contingent, most surely, to our troupe of tramps or Centaurs. We described them, in parenthesis, as Centaurs coming to the blacksmith's forge, and it would be a delight to speculate upon that scene. But it could not be, we must consider, in the suburbs of a town. They must be near the plains and near the chestnut woods. The Arcadian peasants are still frightened of the Centaurs. Travellers who have the hardihood to visit the temple of Apollo at Bassae, in the Peloponnese, which may still necessitate a night spent in a shepherd's cabin, will find themselves in the centre of those legends and may listen to a mention of Centaurs as the Arcadian night grows deeper and they sip the resinn'd wine. This temple, of the Doric order, is the work of Ictinos, architect of the Parthenon. In its loneliness, none of the ruins of antiquity could be more beautiful than this. Here is a living poetry which we do not find at Paestum, on its flat plain of asphodel, too near the sea, nor at Agrigento: only at Segesta, it may be. But even Segesta is not so poetical as Bassae. It is at Bassae that the legends of Arcadia still linger in the air. In those valleys should be the blacksmith's forge. We have no more than the suggestion of that in this backyard of a suburb. But more and more of them assemble, until there are at least a dozen Beggars on

## *Imagery of the Beggar on Horseback*

Horseback. Our acquaintance is their King or chief, the only one who, by common consent, is allowed to ride upon a white horse. The dismounting of this ragged regiment is nothing less than a curious optical experience. If the horsemen, be they Monghols or Kirghiz, Cossacks of the steppes, or Gauchos of the pampas, have become one with their horses, so that they would seem to have become inseparable and a part of one another, we have in this instance the actual opposite of that, when the riders become disintegrated from their steeds and take on another individuality, are transmuted to the ordinary beggars of the streets. And we wonder, the more, at their late eminence as knights or cavaliers.

It may be significant that the scene is Buenos Ayres. This city of two million souls knew its first prosperity from the ranches. A Beggar on Horseback is its urban ghost, the sentinel upon its cinemas and trams. In this spirit we could find golden armour in a tomb above the Rand. The Pharaohs, who have lain in their valley at Luxor for thirty centuries, are moved to a museum in Cairo, built as a pasha's mausoleum, and there they will stay for a few years more until the building catches fire from an hotel or a chain store, and is burnt down in a night. Al Capone's brothels stood where the wigwams of the Indians were pitched. The skeleton of a rhinoceros is dug up in the Strand. A dinosaur's meat is cooked and eaten at a banquet of scientists in St. Petersburg. The lacquey's dresses from the Winter Palace, of the reign of the Empress Catherine, are sold to a cinema company, and are not made use of. Golden coaches ride in lakeside carnivals. There can be free elections while liberty burns out. The sunken submarine washes with the herd of whales, where they feed upon the shallow bottom. It slides, helpless, and sways from side to side, and there are knockings from within the metal hull: tap, tap, down at one end, like the tappings of a blind man's stick. Who knows if it be the rattling of bones: or the opening of the lockers: the empty chairs of the messroom crossing the metal floor: the falling of photographs and books: in the airtight and watertight prison where no light enters. There is only the passing of black leviathan above it, and time has gone out of that world. It is sealed up in a tin. The birds of war fall from the air in flames. There is a petrol filling-station a few yards from the megalithic temple. The lawns of sand are strewn with paper and old tins, where the trippers



## *The Masked Bull*

have their bare feet pierced by the sticks of toffee-apples. There are bungalows from Flamborough to Land's End. Words written in the air in smoke are but advertisement, and not prophecy. The jewel case falls upon the allotment patch. Dancing marathons continue for six weeks, though the bite of the tarantula is but folklore and mocked upon by science. The rose is forced to bloom too long and sheds her perfume. We have the children's hour and then the news of war. Religion is dead, but the fanaticism of a gesture and of a word comes in.

The whine of poverty loudens to a roar. Now it is bellowing like a bull that paws the ground. Already, the gate is opened and the bull has dashed into the arena. Rosinante, blindfolded, is led towards it, and slumps down in blood. The picador probes the bull's shoulder but escapes, himself, and gets another horse. He is foreman, overseer, or userer, a bullthorot Judas who pulls at the horse's head and walks it to the horns. The trumpets sound the next phase. And, always, it is the bull who dies.

But the scene is to be preferred in an open field outside a town. The bull has his head tied up in a sack. He is masked, or conventionally blinded. He can only wander in a corner of the field, as securely as though his brass ring was tied down to a stone. When any persons come along the footpath, above the hedge, he hears and smells them. His bellowing is muffled in the sack and he turns round and stumbles, with his front feet tethered. He is a monster in agony, blinded and hamstrung, his tendons severed by the halfmoon, or *media luna*. That instrument is the Iberian bident, a sharp steel crescent placed upon a pole, for houghing the cowardly bulls that refuse to charge. We imagine him crippled in this cruel way, but his blind brute force is only covered by a piece of sacking. There is only that between the bull's horns and the little children. The starving nag that only drags its bones about is the sign or simulacrum of the poor. It should always be, in imagery, a mare. The bull and the mare are male and female of the tragedy. An old hag of a mare, half-starved, and worn down by foaling. The bull that kills her, and gores another four or five to death, is the brute force of ignorance, made to tire itself, and weakening to run upon the steel. And the tragedy repeats itself, time after time, to the blare of trumpets.

But we will walk towards the abattoir, the *matadero*. It is al-

## *The Matadero*

ways upon the outskirts of the town. The place of the poleaxe, and where the throats are slit. There is much lowing of cattle. The bleating, and the soft voices of the young, are an animal chorus. A cart comes out with a load of bleeding hides, for they have been slaughtering since early morning. Somewhere, inside, must be the altar where the horns are piled. Not arranged in order, but looking this way and that with their torn and jagged skulls. The skull of an animal is so much more ghostly than a human skull, because of its length of face, its straight muzzle and long jaws, and because the human skeleton is nothing but a marionette, even in the Dance of Death. But the toppling of the horns is a sight of degradation. They have been wrenched, a few of them, out of the bony heads; have been torn apart for the cornucopia or the drinking horn, or have the forelock and the fringe of hair still upon them, and a short portion, even, of the bleeding neck. This has its massive and tremendous strength, still visible in terms of thickness, as though it were an oak tree felled, but an oak that ran with blood instead of sap. Monstrous images, the heart, the tongue, the kidneys, lie still quivering upon the trestles and seem to possess some rudimentary meaning. The clown in the old harlequinade came on carrying an ox's heart and a string of sausages, as though his livelihood was in the mean streets just round the corner from the butcher's shop. Some memory of ancient executions for high treason clings to these emblems, as though the humour lay in the fact of dumb animals being subjected to this fearful punishment. Gentlemen were but beheaded and were spared these horrors. The commoner sort were allowed their full rigour. What mercy could a dumb animal expect? Their offence is that their meat and bones and skin are needed.

Remark that we do not set foot inside the matadero. It may be more sordid than the brothel. One, indeed, must hinge upon the other, in the way that a conquered city is put to the sword and looted. Murder and rape go hand-in-hand. When sunset stains the sky, then the slaughtermen wash themselves at a spout of water and walk over to the wineshop, and climb the creaking stair. Children of the street play on the pavement, and their game is the poleaxe and the knife blade. A sudden wind starts up. It rattles the wooden shutters and the tables that stand outside. Wisps of wool blow in the gutters. There are trickles of wine must. Even the very

## *The Town of Petrol Tins*

shutters are stained and dirty. The sun shows out of the mist above the housetops like a ball of blood. Is it blood in the drain, that runs down towards the grating? A garland of paper flowers blows down from the trellis and trails its end into the dust. There is not a note of music, only the creaking of the hinges. Locks of wool and must of wine now choke the gutter. The whole suburb landscape appears to run with blood, until the husbandman, the red face in the vineyard, the slaughterman, goes down to sleep.

And now, behold the town of petrol tins. It is the invention of the age we live in. Not the Stone Age: the Iron Age: the Copper Age: the Age of Gold. This is the Age of Tin. It has not yet reached our shores. But we may come to it, yet. This is the art of the outskirts. Not only of the outer suburbs, but upon the edges of the world, the spiritual and material world, for its inhabitants are little better than the uncleanest of the animals. Those animals that depend on man and cohabit with him in his refuse heaps. creatures of the kitchen-midden, finding their living in what is thrown away. And where do we find the towns of petrol tins? Their prerogative is the hot weather and they do not count the snows. They are summer houses put together in a day with much hammering, tin shacks as simple as the igloo, and more tropically hot than that. At midday they are too hot to touch: in winter they are cold as the frost, but warm up with the oil lamp, and with the body heat. Their joints are stuffed with sacking and old bits of rags to keep the winds away.

In the beginning they are caves, or hollows scooped into the hillside, of which the openings are closed with tins. Of such, some are to be seen in the cliffs above the harbour at Dieppe. They are in greater number outside Marseille. But Spain is their plenitude, their land of plenty. Between Leon and Salamanca the hills and the riverbanks are lined with them. Still, the cave dwellings with their outer walls of tins. Not yet the towns of tins. But, outside Madrid, across the Puente de Toledo,\* over the Manzanares, the howling shrieking poverty begins. It began, thus, before the Spanish Revolution. Now, it may be far worse. The tin huts are whitewashed, as though leprous and painted for their sores. And from Madrid this continues to Cordoba and Malaga, to Cadiz

\* By a pleasing coincidence this Aztec looking bridge is the work of Pedro de Ribera who built the Castillo di Bibataubin

## *The Town of Petrol Tins*

and Alicante. At the last named it is more primitive, yet, for the Gypsies are living in the giant cement blocks that were destined for the breakwater in the harbour. These lie strewn about where the steel arm of the crane has dropped them, as though tumbled by an earthquake or a tidal wave, at all angles, leaning one against another, or standing erect like sentryboxes but facing in all directions, as though the danger lay from every side at once. From the bank above, you can see down into this nightmare encampment, the cement blocks being three-sided, and open on the fourth, so that an old sack for a curtain does duty for the door, and the cube is roofless, a place in which to lie awake and look out upon the stars. The sardonic humour, or salt of such a monstrous jest, is in the inability of its inhabitants to turn their dwellings round. A family, who live but a foot away, may have to go round three sides of a square before they reach the other door. For inconvenience, it must be equivalent to living in a children's puzzle. But when the wind blows, or it rains, they move their rags and cooking pots to another block, close to, with its open side to Africa or the Sierra, as the weather goes.

For more of the towns of petrol tins it is only necessary to cross to Africa. If the map were published of such places it would mark them in Morocco, and at the far end of the Mediterranean in Greece and Asia Minor. During the transference of the populations there were refugees in their tens of thousands living in this manner near Athens, near Corinth, and near Salonika. They had come down to the status of the wandering Vlachs. To this level had fallen the descendants of the Asiatic Greeks. Meanwhile, an equal population lived in misery in Asia Minor. And, there, two points were to be noticed in this debris of the age of motors. The taxicab drivers of Istanbul never drove alone. They had always a companion with them for fear of robbery and murder. Their homes were their motors, and they lived and slept in them. The other curiosity was the use made of old rubber tyres. This was first seen, speaking personally, in the antics of a beggar who came crawling forward on his hands and knees. His feet were two stumps and, in place of boots, he wore kneecaps made out of a section of a rubber tyre, while his hands had gloves tied upon them of the same material, as though in literal interpretation of 'Hands Schuh', the German word for gloves. Nearly every beggar

## *Population of the Town*

had his boots made out of a rubber tyre. It gave to them the soft-footed silence of the modern shoe and they were quick to take profit from their new discovery.

One town of petrol tins, however, must be chosen for an example. There must be many others, we do not doubt it, in the United States. For ourselves those would be a portent since we would understand the language spoken there, and be appalled to see giant negroes and low whites living side by side together in their shacks. This is the meaning of the whurring of the wheels. Such is the living that machines condemn men to. But it is better to speak of what our eyes have seen, and a town is to be preferred that is half-Spaniard and half-Moor, the suburb of old tins, for instance, that is in full view from Casablanca, in Morocco, to be enjoyed from the windows and openings of the quartier réservé. To this, we add our observations of other towns of petrol tins, writing of no town in particular but of their whole total. The conjunction of Moor and Spaniard is important, somehow, to their perfection, for it is as if these two races who have fought together for so long had agreed to sink their miseries and whine and howl together of their woes. The two races are all but indistinguishable, now. The Spaniard is no longer pure blooded and has forgotten, nearly, to speak Spanish. As for the Moor, he is part negro. The general headgear of the men is a beret, or a knitted woollen cap. That is the only difference, but it does not hold true. Their clothes are a ragged coat and trousers, or they may wear the Moorish shirt below a terrible burnouse the texture of which, from dirt and wear, is a horror that is indescribable in words, a coal-cloth, a dust-integument, a living winding sheet livid with the stains of parturition and from starvation sores, used also, for many years together, as a handkerchief for rheumy lungs and nose. Their bare legs have been rubbed with ashes, on purpose, to prevent the bites of insects. Every corner and every tin shack swarms with children; some few with fair hair, the legacy of Goth or Vandal, but it is wan and lifeless against their darker skins, as if it were a blond weed that had lost all life, all blood corpuscle. The women are raven black of hair, insolent in manner, dressed as raggedly as Gypsies, and always with something of the movements of Spanish dancers, as though those rhythms were natural to them. Were there music here it would be the guitar, and we

## *Breakfast from the Garbage Tin*

would expect the cracking of the castanets, Gaditanian dancers in this town of whitewashed tins. •

In their multitude, the inhabitants must have evolved new manners and a special mode of living. For life, here, is as peculiar as in Venice; in those pile villages off Papua or the Aleutian isles; in the cave pueblos of Arizona or New Mexico; anywhere that particular conditions have confined or circumscribed the day and night. To begin with, no number or address. It is inconceivable that letters or parcels should be delivered. No butcher, milkman, baker, go their rounds. The dustman does not call for rubbish. No rag and bone merchant cries his wares. They live on their own refuse and on the garbage of the greater town. In the morning, but this need not be at Casablanca, for it is universal to such places, you may see an inhabitant of the town of shacks come over to the main street and wait furtively about. Every morning, at that hour, the rubbish is collected from the shops and houses and crammed into tin containers, the size of a large milk can. These are left standing on the pavement until the rubbish cart comes round and takes them. When no one is looking, he creeps forward and lifts up the lid. You see him rummaging into its depths, while his expert hands go through the contents, knowing everything by touch and feel. It is but a few seconds before he lifts things out. Meanwhile, it is his breakfast, eaten standing. Crusts of bread; an old bone, thrown out cabbage stalks, a lettuce leaf left over from the family supper, stained with the dregs and quite discoloured. All of which he eats ravenously, not even, in his haste, holding a hand to his mouth, but with both hands plunged in to look for more. He is a boy of eighteen or twenty, of native blood, an Arab of the town, in a suit of rags, and wearing a beret that appears to have grown insolubly to his hair. And, in another moment, he has come to the cigarette ends, which he pours into a tattered pocket. But, now, he has finished his meal and slinks away on silent feet, looking back to make certain that he was not noticed. His escape is exactly that of a half-starved dog who has been eating from a pail in some backyard and knows well that he is doing wrong. When he is round the corner he will pull out the cigarette butts from his pocket and count them, getting muddled, maybe, if there are more than three or four. And he brings out his crusts and bones and the nameless refuse of the garbage tin.

## *The Beggar as Serpent*

Probably that meal is as punctual in time as anything eaten in the town of shacks. They have no supper and no midday meal. Their hunks of bread are, more often, eaten standing. Or hurrying along, for it is noticeable that the inhabitants are always in a hurry. There is this to distinguish them in lands of the siesta. Those who live furtively, by thieving, develop this feeling that they are being watched. They have to keep on the move in order to distract attention from themselves. More simply, because whatever they may be doing is sure to be suspect. It is wiser not to stand still for too long in one place. They conform to the same average of appearance in order not to be recognised. And this is very different in intention from the ordinary beggar who prefers to rely upon his dramatic instinct. His ideal must be to make himself both memorable and horrid. But this is of the type who comes up, silently, and hisses into your ear. That other is the doglike beggar, sitting up and whining for a bone. This is very different. He is snakelike. Not a beggar but a thief. And his exit is like the manner in which a snake makes off. He coils away, repulsive and untouchable, a young serpent who is gone in an instant and might have entered into a crevice in the wall.

The children of this town of tins are worthy of a chapter to themselves. To those who want to know their picture it is only necessary to look once again at Cruikshank's immortal drawing of the workhouse children, in *Oliver Twist*. It is the scene when little Oliver asks for more. With this only difference that these are street Arabs. Their little faces are not pale and white. But all of them, where the shapes of their heads are concerned, are as alike as minnows. Who does not remember, in the drawing from *Oliver Twist*, the small boy who licks his spoon, and those others, on each side of him, with varying degrees of doubt and expectancy upon their faces? The small boys, sitting with their backs to us, too hungry, still, to look round but intent upon the last spoonful of gruel in their platters? Can we not, even, smell the workhouse room in Cruikshank's drawing?

Here, in this modern town, the faces are the same. Except, as we say, for their colour, which is that of the dregs of coffee. These are little Moslems, if, indeed, they could be said to be of any religion at all. Their names, if we knew them, would be Mehemet, Achmet, Ali, Hassan, and so on, through the small repertory of

## *Children of the Town*

Moslem names. But it is not as Moslems that we look upon them. They are street Arabs, that is all. Their heads are closely cropped, as in the workhouse in *Oliver Twist*, and for the same reason; foreheads abnormally low, faces almond shaped, and eyes so big that they are the chief feature in the face. Look again at the drawing and see if it is not the same; whether starvation is not eternal in its effects and can invent nothing new. The eyes, of course, here in Northern Africa are as dark as sloes; and it is dreadful, when one child carries another of nearly its own size and weight, to see the flies crawling in the corners of the baby's eyes. The flies are there on sufferance. The child is used to them. It is too late, indeed, to drive them off, but their corruption is, in symbolism, an allegory of death. It is like the corner of a painting of dead men in their coffins. Add to which that all the children, big and small, have running noses, such being as decidedly in sign of them as crest or cockscomb. Their nostrils and upper lips are always sore and smarting with the mucus. Notice, also, the abnormal thinness of their wrists, and how they have no width of shoulder, but only, as it were, an enlargement of the neck into the body, like the parchment neck and shoulders of an unwrapped mummy. Out of this misery comes the treble voice of a young child, in a beggar's whine, but it is a bird's voice or the voice of a little animal, and is scarcely human. Yet, as other children, they spend the day at play. Two of them are spinning a top; others, with a pointed stick, draw designs in the dust: or play a game with strings or marbles. We are to imagine that such games were played in the workhouse. They had, at least, the human comfort of the slums; the winter warmth of dark passages and doorways, the food stalls, the yellow orbit of the gaslamp. Warm airs of cooking came up through the gratings in the pavement. Even if you starved, you starved in company.

Instead, everything is modern here. It is as though you were living in a wrecked aeroplane, one that has come down into a burning desert, which is icily cold at night, and this metal wreckage is the only shelter that is near to hand. In the same manner that sailors shipwrecked upon an island make huts for themselves from the ship's timbers, so this modernity, fallen from the skies, serves for a habitation. In these brand-new ruins, where you can still read the names upon the tins, live the same barbarians who dwelt, once, among marble columns, by fallen capitals, in ruins



### *Landscape of the Shacks*

of a temple or of a forum. Were it their's to choose, they would answer you at once which set of ruins they preferred. This, even, is not ruins at all. It is built up, tin by tin, as the lorries dump them. Nothing, here, is classical or antique. There is no tin that is more than ten years old.

The lorry, itself, counts for a modern miracle. Near-by there is a petrol filling station, and a place to beg for tins. Heaps of dung reeking with the steam of their own fermentation would describe such a settlement, were it not that the dung heaps have been dried up by the sun and winds, and the smoke from the tin houses is dry and acrid. It is not steam, off something wet and smouldering, but the smoke of a few dried sticks, enough to cook by and not to eat like the mere animals. They are esconced here as insects upon the hide of some huge pachyderm. Their living is from what they find. Even this mound, this little slope of sand, is no more than the refuse or dung heap of the town, thrown down here for a thousand years and silted up with sand, become a sand hillock. In the distance, the plain and the other hills are bounded by a line. Nothing but the winds, burning hot or icy cold, blow out of that distance. There is no need for more. The road into the town has dropped crusts and cigarette ends to find. A cart comes past from the slaughterhouse, and there will be cheap offal at the door.

One night, soon, there will be a storm of thunder. The white-washed tins will look, in the lightning, as though they were daubed with salt, for curing, and to arrest decomposition. It is not raining, yet. You could walk in the narrow alleys and wonder at the flickering of the lightning, and think of Cyclopæan walls. But these are built of tins from which the very spirit has run out. They could, as well, be palaces and convents of old bottles: hanging gardens of old bones: the terraces of Queen Dido, for this is in the ancient territory of Carthage, but built up of skulls: a lamasery with salt for snow, and flat roofs where the iris and the poppy grow, where the conch is blown at full moon. This is the beggar town. The voice of thunder comes and goes in mystery, with the shaking of the sistrum. It begins to pour with rain.



No account of beggars can omit the beggars who are blind. A

## *Blind Beggars*

blind beggar is, indeed, the full meaning of that term of pity. 'In the last court I found about three hundred Tchaudors, prisoners of war, covered with rags; they were so tormented by the dread of their approaching fate, and by the hunger which they had endured several days, that they looked as if they had just risen from their graves. They were separated into two divisions, namely, such as had not yet reached their fortieth year, and were to be sold as slaves, or to be made use of as presents, and such as from their rank or age were to be regarded as Aksakals (grey-beards) or leaders, and who were to suffer the punishment imposed by the Khan. The former, chained together by their iron collars in numbers of ten to fifteen, were led away, the latter submissively awaited the punishment awarded. They looked like lambs in the hands of their executioners. Whilst several were led to the gallows or the block, I saw how, at a sign from the executioner, eight aged men placed themselves down on their backs upon the earth. They were then bound hand and foot, and the executioner gouged out their eyes in turn, kneeling to do so on the breast of each poor wretch; and after every operation he wiped his knife, dripping with blood, upon the white beard of the hoary unfortunate. As each fearful act was completed, the victim liberated from his bonds, groping around with his hands, sought to gain his feet. Some fell against each other, head against head, others sank powerless to the earth again, uttering low groans, the memory of which will make me shudder as long as I live!'

Had we liberty to wander with the author Arminius Vambéry, in the markets and bazaars of Khiva, in 1863, we would find the same victims or their brethren crouched in the dust. For few, if any, would die from their affliction. For the first weeks they would be maddened in the black pit of blindness. How ever, knocking and bruising themselves at every step, did they find their way from the prison to the market place! It must be a torment to try to sleep, to find a rest in darkness when the whole world was dark; to know that, even so, it was but a private and personal black pit, skin deep, but fathomless, in which you crawled alone, excluded from the light. To have a coin dropped to you, to have a crust put into your hand, was, every time, a token of this little distance. It was night, sleepless night for them, always and for ever.

To be born blind is another matter. It is reasonable to suppose

## *The Blind as Holy Men*

that, knowing no other state, they do not suffer. To be told of a thing that you can never have is to be compared with the poor man's envy of great riches. They are accustomed to the darkness that they live in. It is not so hard for them if they have never seen. What is pitiful is the condominium with poverty. They live immediately, from birth, in a world of ascetic practice like that achieved by holy men after years of preparation. This is the world, pre-eminently, in which to think of death. It is the dark cell of the anchorite, and its ornaments, as with the Tibetan hermits who immerse themselves, should be a drum made of a human skull and a trumpet of a thigh bone. He is walled up, and there is but an opening to pass in food and water. You may knock for him and, after a moment, an old and withered hand comes to the orifice and feels that window ledge, and finds it empty. Slowly, how slowly, he withdraws that reptile hand. He has lost the count of days. If ever the seal is broken and he is lifted out, like the blind man, he will ask for light and find it an agony.

In a sense, indeed, all the blind are holy. If trust and innocence, that is to say, are part of saintliness. Not in the tap tapping of their sticks, for those are the peripatetics who in the fury of their affliction would prove themselves as other men. But we would find them in the street, selling matches. In that, there is unconscious symbolism. The matches, when struck, are sticks or spokes of fire, that element at which the blind can warm their hands, but which their eyes will never see. They could, in simile, be hawkers crying angels' wings: a crown of pearls worn in a coffin, a painted butterfly fluttering at a prison window. Fifty sparks of fire are sold here for a penny.

It is to be expected that there will be found beautiful countenances among blind beggars. Given their renunciation, this must be certain. In a provincial capital in France there was this instance. The town, as it stands, is the creation of a King of Poland. Its square has palaces on every side. It is the Place Stanislas of Nancy. Stanislas Leszczyński, father-in-law of Louis XV, was given Lorraine in exchange for Poland. The architect Héré, and Jean Lamour the ironsmith, transformed the town for him. For the façades of Héré, Lamour made gilded balconies and, in the square, gates of wrought iron and ironwork grilles above the street openings. In the distance, at the end of every street, there

## *The Blind Beggar of Nancy*

are triumphal arches. The Place Stanislas is more regular, and not less magnificent, than the Piazza of St. Mark.\* Only there is no religion in it. It is all palaces and fountains—and there is a theatre—but there is no church. Its epoch is the age of reason. To many minds it is more beautiful because it is reasonable, and all human. To others, this should be a spa or watering place. It is architecture of pleasure, the promenade and the bandstand, though the music would be exquisite and the crowd dressed in silks. But, beyond the square, no greater contrast could be found. Behind the triumphal arches, even, indeed, upon the way to them, the plaster has begun to fall. The street is long and grey, the colour of bread that has been steeped in water. If trees there be, they are planetrees which make a dappled shadow and disease the grey-white walls. The stems, too, are pockmarked with their own contagion. In the Place Stanislas they would be spreading planetrees. Here, they are the first change noticed while the dead body is still lying on its bed, before the hammering of the coffin. The tram car with the incessant ringing of its bell is the hearse, the death chariot, taking passengers down the long street to the cemetery and its paper flowers. Halfway along that interminable depression there is, or was, a tram halt. Persons get down from the tramcar counting their centimes, and putting them away.

Here, the blind beggar stood. He was a tall man, taller than the average of his race, and in the early 'thirties, with a fair beard. Dressed in a long overcoat and a felt hat which from exposure to all weathers had become stiffened in its brims and had found, as it were, a fixed shape of its own. At first sight, the peculiar feature was his flaxen beard. This was the Frank, the Carolingian or Merovingian descent. His large frame, for starvation cannot shrink the bones, was in proof of this. The eyes of this extraordinary figure were the blank eyes of a statue. He had straight features and, at this, the resemblance began. His expression was not of suffering but of sadness. An intense and anguished pity, or compassion. Upon the two or three days I passed him in the street he had not altered. And, at every time, the resemblance grew more mysterious. There are many Poles in Nancy, not from the eighteenth century, but because the workers in the coal and iron mines of Lorraine are Polish emigrants. With the Poles there came in Polish Jews. This blind beggar was a Jew. I came to think of

## *The Wandering Jew*

him, not as Christ, whom he so much resembled, but as though he was the Wandering Jew. It seemed to me that in his long wanderings he had become blinded, in a lime kiln, shall we say, and was kept here as a blind beggar until some new dispensation would allow him to get lost again and go on wandering. In this fantasy there may well have been some memory of the story of—was it Burke or Hare?—who turned King's evidence and was released from prison only to be recognized, years later, by his fellow workmen and to be blinded by them in a lime kiln, after which he became a blind beggar and, half a century later, with a long white beard and sightless eyes used to beg in Regent Street. It was, even, as though he waited here for someone to come up to him and speak into his ear. Until his identity became known to someone, and he was recognized, he must stay here begging. If we are to believe this legend, not in the corporeal sense, but as a spirit that inhabits first one human shell and then another, this was whom we saw behind those blinded eyes. His human ties are of no moment to the legend. It would not matter if he had a blind sister who tapped her way to him, and they stumbled home together in the falling light. To a cellar basement, where is no need for them to strike a match and light the candle. It is enough that for those few days he was revealed to one other soul. No use to search for him in the long suburbs of the town. If he is found, it will be but the empty shell, and his secret will have fled from him.\*

\* The 14th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* gives this information: 'The legend first appears in a pamphlet alleged to have been printed at Leyden in 1602. This pamphlet relates that Paulus van Eizen, d. 1598, Bishop of Schleswig, had met at Hamburg in 1542 a Jew named Ahasuerus, who declared he was eternal and was the same who had been punished by Jesus. The pamphlet is supposed to have been written by Chrysostomos Duderlaeus of Westphalia and printed by one Christoff Coutzer, but as no such author or printer is known it has been conjectured that the whole story is a Protestant myth. The popularity of the pamphlet soon led to reports of the appearance of this mysterious being almost everywhere. Besides the original meeting of the Bishop and Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew was stated to have appeared in Spain (1575), Vienna (1599), Prague (1602), at Lubeck (1603), in Bavaria (1604), Ypres (1623), Brussels (1640), Leipzig (1642), Paris (1644), by the *Turkish Spy*, Stamford (1658), Astrakhan (1672), and Frankenstein (1678). In the next century he was seen at Munich (1721), Altbach (1766), Brussels (1774), Newcastle (1790) (see Brand, *Popular Antiquities*), and in London between 1818 and 1830 (see *Athenaeum*, 1866, II, 561). The latest report of his appearance was near Salt Lake City, in 1868, when he is said to have made himself known to a Mormon, named O'Grady. A curious bearded individual, who was the

## *The Doss House in Moscow*

In the month of June he will have been fleeing down the rose-hung hedges. The whole sky behind him flickered with the fires of artifice and destruction. In a moment a black shadow passed, and there was a rushing of steel wings. It has gone by, but the night air throbs with engines. They wheel and dip like swallows, but the horror of their bones, or girders, is that they have no feathers. It is flight without plumes.

At other times, in any street, in any town. The person who sits silent in the doss house, and never speaks to anyone: who paid his kopeck in the lodging house and stood, all night through, holding to a rope, for this was cheaper than a bed. There were many such in Moscow, by the fitful oil lamp. The ropes hung from the ceiling, and they stood in different figures of fatigue and death, atrophied, without movement, as though turned to wood, or wax, or stone. They were bodies dropped down from the gallows when the noose had slipped: bell ringers, overcome by death, in an infernal belfry: tormented demons: the tortures of Sisyphus or Tantalus: Prometheus, lashed to his rock, and devoured by vultures: all in a common lodging house. In the morning; Ah! what a dawn! to unclasp sore hands, blistered with the rope, to lift the dreadful load of limbs and body, and stumble into the greyness, still watched by the street lamp with its promise for to-night, and to-morrow night, and many more. Night prisons of the workhouse or the casual ward. It is better to pay tuppence or threepence, or a kopeck, than to work for this. How many have slept on the Embankment and have known linen sheets again! There are old railway arches, disused bridges, which have become dormitories for tramps.

A tramp's riviera, in their own words, exists on the beaches of the Île St. Louis, in the Seine. It is easy to lean on the parapet of the quay and look down upon them. This is what we see on a spring morning, even in January or February, when there is an hour of sun. I saw them in the former month of 1939. The sensation is that of peering down into a bear pit. This is the tramp's Lido, and it catches all the sun. Some twenty to thirty tramps,

centre of a great crowd, and who was reputed in the town to be the Wandering Jew, appeared either at Santos or at Para, in Brazil, soon after 1920. I remember the letter of an eye witness in, I believe, the *Saturday Review* of those years, but have lost the reference. It is time he was seen again.

## *The Tramps of Île St. Louis*

young men who could be soldiers, are lying on the dirty beach with their backs to the wall. Some are sleeping; others get up and cross over to a group of friends. From high above, we watch the mysteries of the tramp's toilette. Some comb their hair; others are shaving at a cracked bit of mirror. There is much tying, and untying, of parcels wrapped in paper, an operation which can continue for as long as half-an-hour together and, every time, one cannot be certain of what the package holds. Each object is wrapped and rolled up in another. On occasion it is oiled paper, like black waterproof, the manual of a trunk murder, reminiscent of those parcels left in waiting rooms and luggage offices. Repellent scraps of food make their appearance; strings of brown meat; a sausage and a hunk of bread; a nameless substance eaten from a newspaper, much relished, for it is dawdled over. In another corner books and newspapers are exchanged. It is the nucleus of a lending library. A tramp takes out his needle and thread, as carefully as any woman, and begins to mend his clothes. Shoes are being patched, and in the full sunlight a tramp cuts his toenails with a pair of scissors.

They are talking all the time. One had the impression that in their packages they had everything they required, and that their lives, far from being vagrant, were planned to every hour. These were persons who preferred to be idle, but had to work for that, standing, these cold nights, above some grating of warm air, sleeping in the daytime, and keeping awake at night. From all over the city they came to the Île St. Louis early in the morning. If you did not lean across the parapet you had no inkling of them, and would not have known of their bivouac upon the open beach, so near to the tugs and barges. 'On dirait le côté d'Azur' were some words that floated up to me from that patch of sun. Others of them were talking of the political situation. A new turn in the perpetual crisis had been reached, and it was curious from above this odd gathering to hear the names of l'Angleterre and Hitler upon their lips. This was the way a sick world shook in its fevers. They felt disaster coming. The long hours of their Lido burned to a climax and began to cool. At two o'clock in the afternoon the plage was nearly empty. One by one, with their packages, they had set off for the town.

An old boot thrown away into a hedge is the tramp's Parthenon.

## *The Woman with the Perambulator*

Of such are his ruins, or the tumbled columns of his temple. They leave a trail with torn rags tied to a briar in the hedges. Hawthorn, elder, blackberry, fly their banners, and mean that a wanderer has passed by and left this message. But, where the boot lies, he has passed the night. Under the railway arch there is his kitchen-midden. Once, these were heaps of oyster shells gathered by primitive men, the *Ichthyophagi*, from an unstained ocean. The winds smelt sweet. It was a hundred thousand years before the bellying of the sail. The cockleshell had its own gold in it; and pearls were no more valued than are pearls of barley. Their stacks of pearlshells were as high as houses. But, under the railway arch, the midden is a heap of old tins. There are charred newspapers and sordid bandages for cut thumbs or bleeding feet. The rags tied to the elder are black, as though torn from a black petticoat. Nettles and pink flax grow close up to the dirty bricks. And the arch is their cloaca. They have not been ashamed of that. Their baggage wagon is an old perambulator, as battered as the pram of Mrs. Webster among the waxworks. She wheeled the dead body across London—was it from Lambeth to Kentish Town?—and this perambulator is, and should be, wheeled by a woman dressed in shabby black. We would recall that when the police came to arrest Mrs. Webster she was seated at a tinny piano. They asked her questions, and she went on playing. To their enquiry for what reason she had bought the poison, she sang back to them 'To kill the rats, to kill the rats.' We are not told to what tune she fitted her refrain. In all probability it was some cheap song of the music halls, sung by pierrots at the seaside while a paddle steamer took the trippers down the summer bay. This murderess must have been as strong as any man. We would see, in imagination, the shape of her black boots and hear her footsteps on those endless pavements crossing London. We would see her coming towards us wheeling her hearse, her funeral car, which was piled up high with packages.

Our woman in black, under the railway arch, wears a long skirt that trails upon the ground, bought cheap from the secondhand clothes shop, when the cupboard was opened after a funeral. Inside the dress, with its long sleeves and narrow waist, she walks with a long stride. Both the dress and the perambulator could date from forty years ago: it could be the gown of a prostitute, worn



## *Encampment near a Canal*

on the wet pavements and in the promenades of theatres. Beside her walks her lover. The perambulator is nearly broken with the weight it carries. Did a child ever ride in it? We place in it, for first occupant, a slum child, whom it would be a long business, now, to trace. For people move from slum to slum as though they were not satisfied. And the pram has come down in descent from the dark passage to the railway arch. What strange bond can it be between this pair of persons? They first met, like everyone else, by accident. Now it is too late, and life has gone too far. No one better can turn up for either of them. In the morning they will wander away by instinct, or to a fixed plan? From long experience they know which way the winds blow: where are the cold corners where refuse lies to pick among.

There are encampments where the embers are ever warm, and it is only necessary to rake the ashes and put some sticks to them. It can be on an old fairground behind an advertisement hoarding; or in the green lanes by a lonely farm. Near a canal, perhaps, where the barge floats by, with only a woman's hand upon the tiller, and from the cabin comes a sight of brass ornaments and china cups and saucers, with the tin pails and water cans painted with their flowers or castles. On a Sunday morning when the bargewomen wear their 'Sunday black' and their black bonnets, while the barges are moored outside an inn upon the canal bank, close to the humpbacked bridges.

Another camping ground is in the disused brick kilns, near to an old colliery. The slag heaps, like artificial hills, are covered with the pink flax, and children from the village wander there with their groundsel-coloured hair. In the distance we hear the Salvation Army band.

The road is black with coal dust, and the brick kilns lie to either side in a long line or a double row. A furtive and unpleasant air clings to the brick hills, as though clandestine lovers met here, or these were the murder fields. It is because the low buildings are so weed grown and so dark inside. They could be of any age; not mid-Victorian, but a prehistoric mining town. What race of men worked in them? In the wood beyond, among the six-foot bracken and the rowan trees, there are long galleries that lead into the hill, haunted, it is said, by the ghost of an early miner. The brick kilns, themselves, might be the beehive houses of Zimbabwe. In the late

## *Diaspora of the Tramp*

afternoon the tramps arrive in that deserted street. We would see them looking for sticks in the outskirts of the wood. At that time, the golden sunset lit this valley, so near to the steel town and the collieries. If you listened, there was no sound but the voices of children upon the hill. The white cornfield, white in the mist of distance, is being reaped across the valley. Far off, there is the sound of an engine. It would be strange to come back again, at midnight, and look among the kilns until you found the tramps' fire and could hear their breathing, but would not dare to peer within.

That is a mining town in Derbyshire. We could find them, too, in an old sawmill, in the quarries and the charcoal pits, in the wooded dingle, as tinkers, among the hills and the grey houses roofed with slate, driving a two-wheeled cart and claiming to be born in Limerick, met with in a lane at foot of a holy thorn-tree, which was strung with rags and amulets; in the terrible suburbs; outside the 'pull-in', waiting for the lorries; on the shore, by a hedge of aloes, picking the prickly pears as fodder for their camels, and in the drought eating, themselves, of that forbidden fruit, sleeping in the shadow of an upturned boat, where waves lap the columns of a fallen temple; that special race who take up their dwelling among ruins; at 'cold harbour', far away among the meadows, in the earthworks and the Roman camp, in the stone circles which are giant hearthstones; in Lilliput island among the works of pygmy hands; in caves where there are bones of mammoth; on foot, in carts, in caravans; begging from crutches, in wheelbarrows, or crouched in the dust; howling, whining, or whispering for pity, with their Kings and ragged dynasties; and with the Beggar on Horseback for a proverb proven, and truth out of an image and a string of words



*Book VIII*

ENVOI AND BACCHANALE





## *Envoi and Bacchanale*

**P**ut back the clock!

A loud bell is tolling, tolling through the town.  
The houses of the town are a honeycomb of bricks, of red, red bricks. Each brick is a separate cell echoing the sound. Brick by brick the houses have been built, like the cells in a honeycomb. And their honey is this tolling, tolling of the hour. The roads of the town are cobblestones. Dead leaves float upon the canal.

Upstairs, up a winding stair, the anchorite, the red robed anchorite waits all day long. When you knock his deep voice replies; and then he is absorbed again. His table stands upon a step or platform, at one end of the long room. This is heaped with books, a skull, an hourglass and a vase of flowers. His quill pens and the knife for pointing them, an inkpot and a case for spectacles make a litter round him. For he leans right forward, both elbows on the table, watching and staring. His long, thin fingers hold your attention, and his long and aquiline features. He has a high forehead, is bald and tonsured, and has grey hair which is streaked with black. His beard, too, has black in it, as well as grey; and this gives to him a kind of wasted virility, which is marked in signs of temper. He is highly irritable and not inclined to mercy. But it is more particularly his attitude which is strange, leaning forward so absorbed and with so fixed a stare. He is looking into nothing; or it is the words written in a huge book lying open before him. He has read the words and is wholly absorbed, now, in a gloss or contemplation upon them. Their import and meaning reach to him with a force that paralyses his understanding: or he has lost the world, and the afterworld by a word read wrong.

He leans, there, before our eyes, and something in his attitude and expression carries him into living reality and we hear the tolling of the town bell and the rustling of his long sleeves. If it is not his attitude, the way in which he leans, what is most impressive

## *The Red Anchorite*

and peculiar about him is the red he wears. It is a monk's robe, only made of red. It is of wool, dyed scarlet. But, once again, it is the way he leans. He leans out of the picture, or is leaning out of the world. Where he looks he leans. He is leaning in the direction of his thoughts. He follows his own meditation, or is so intent upon the words he reads that their legibility, the feat of reading them correctly into words, is as important as the result of some experiment in test tube or crucible. Upon its success, or unsuccess, depends the world, and more than the world.

We have said that you can hear the rustling of his sleeves. They are tied at his wrists for greater ease in writing. And the narrowing makes his fingers thinner and longer still. For he is, now, so entirely absorbed that the hand of the elbow on which he leans is as if withered. They are like dead fingers; but this is only their thinness and pallor. The fingers are like the claws of a rodent. They are narrow and rigid. It is his hands which begin to give him personality. The rodent character is carried from his hands into his nature. He gnaws at his knowledge, or the weight of it gnaws at him and allows no rest to his spirit. But this is conveyed, also, in his thin temples, which are wasted and ascetic, not from illness but from fasting and privation. At the same time, his physical strength is apparent in his gaunt height and in the quickness of his movements. He must walk with a long, quick tread. This is no invalid of the study, but a strong man confined and imprisoned in his learning. Also, his gaze is not myopic, nor shortsighted, it is the staring of eyes that are too strong for the dusty pages of a book. His temper comes, then, from these limitations. They are barriers which he should have broken down and traversed, long ago. They are obstacles which have delayed him until it is too late. The hour-glass which stands in front of him upon the table is his worst enemy. And, as we think of this, in the town below, the bell stops and the hour tolls out.

This hermit has become so much a part of his cell that he is only himself, and living, at his desk. He is the old, old crustacean of the wall, the limpet of the rock. The objects round him are the paraphernalia of his work. Their never-varying arrangement is in accordance with his code of self. And he could no more change their position upon his table than take to writing with his left hand instead of with his right. The only objects that are not static

## *Marinus van Romerswaele*

are his pens and spectacles. They lie where he puts them, and are often lost. Also, the copper candlestick doubles his labour with its light for winter evenings. Then, the sand glistens as he drops it on the ink. The candle flame flickers. A loud wind rattles at the leads.

More striking, even than his thin temples or thin hands is the impression of his long red gown. It is the robe of a wizard or astrologer. It is feminine in the way it reaches to his feet and, in priestlike travesty, reveals the big boots of a man. This is the actor or charlatan: but with centuries of sanction to its neuter effect. Priests and wizards have worn the long skirts of a woman for this difference, to be neither man nor woman and apart. He has worn this since childhood and is used to it. No clothes could disguise him. He is the priest, incarnate. And yet, looking at his sleeves again, at his thin wrists and peculiar temples, there is something which is not priestly, nor well-fed in his appearance. This is not the fatted capon. He is nervous and irritable. His energies are discontented. He is fanatically sure of himself and, in his next breath, is uncertain.

In the meantime, more remains to be told about his mind. As we have said, he is positive, and then is troubled with doubts. He is a man of temper, who only wishes for the truth and is prepared for either meaning of it. His force controls him, and even inclines him towards whatever fate is chosen for him, not in resignation, but to know the secret and attain to power. But we must return into his time with him and climb his stair. The imminence of this red robed man haunts the corner in which he hides. We see the new grain of his wooden bookshelves, marked like damask, or like the watering in silk. He has fresh flowers in the flower vase before him, his quill pens are cut anew. It is another day upon the calendar.

This is the painting of a red hermit which has hung, ever since I can remember it, and for many years before that, upon the walls of my home. It used to be in a high-walled room, far off, at the end of a passage. Now, it hangs upon the main staircase; but the nearer focus has not lessened its effect. He is as I have described him: no more, nor less. The painter was Marinus van Romerswaele, a pupil of Quentin Matsys, and much patronized by Philip II of Spain. There are paintings by his hand at the Escorial;



## *Renegade*

and that is all we need tell of Marinus, for it is better to keep his personality a mystery. Little more, indeed, is known of him.\* But many things more remarkable than facts are to be read into this picture. It is, even, in itself a contradiction of the truth in that strange manner in which the figure leans forward out of the canvas. On the wall, behind his head, there hangs the red hat of a Cardinal. He is a prince, or father of the church, in fact, St Jerome, but, having said this, the immediacy of the living man returns. For we come back, now, to look at him and in order to let our interpretation of him lead us what way it must. There is, and there always has been, something which is sinister in the way in which he leans out of the world and into it, from the physical into the metaphysical. He ponders on mortality and immortality, while his hand is resting on the skull upon his desk. But, the whole time, he is looking beyond the book and out of it.

He is not less peculiar, now, than he was in early memory. It need not be remembered that he is St Jerome. He is a hermit in red, in an environment that, as we shall soon realize, is alien to his own time and, even more, to his supposed or ostensible personality. Everything that is concerned with him has its reserve or under meaning and is in contradiction, as it were, to its own surface truth. There is in this painting, to begin with, the anachronism of its technique. It is a primitive picture, painted in the middle of the sixteenth century. If it is in spiritual relationship to the work of any other painter it is only to Zurbarán; but the austerity of that later hand was tintured by modernity, being under the influence of Caravaggio, while nothing could be further removed from Marinus than that southern melodrama and its patternings of light and shade. This picture is in the technique of Quentin Matsys, who was born in 1466, in the middle of a previous century. But it is larger in drawing than Quentin Matsys, and is given a kind of day by day reality by the truth of its detail. It is the por-

\* The dates on his pictures range from 1528 to 1560, and he is supposed to have been alive as late as 1567. Marinus must be identified with the Marino di Siressa mentioned by Vasari, and the Marino di Dirisea of Guicciardini. Siressa or Sirisea, is the little town of Zierickzee, in the island of Schouwen, where he was born. With the other islands of Walcheren, Beveland and Goeree, Schouwen is part of the Dutch province of Zeeland, the Dutch for sailor or sea lander is *de Zeeuw*, and 'marinus' is no more than the Latinized form of sea lander, or sailor. *Romerswaede*, or *Roymerswalen*, will have been his family name.

## *Renegade*

trait of someone who through concentration of thought is no longer solely and entirely his physical self. He has fallen into a trance. His eyes have been focussed for so long a time upon the uncial letters in the manuscript before him that the texture of their sacred words has become the spell by which he has escaped from his body. These are the pinions upon which he is supported, so that a state of magical power or control is portrayed. The perils of this hovering above earth are written in his pallor and in the conspicuous thinness to which we drew attention. He is worn and exhausted by the effort and, at the same time, it is the drug for which he craves. This, and only this, is in compensation for his labour. If it does not come to him, it is time wasted, and time is the load put upon life, which gathers speed and gathers weight.

But there are yet other things strange and peculiar in his person. No shade of Dutch Calvinism is to be seen in his monastic cell. \* The red brick town of Zierickzee must have held many Calvinists, but this red hermit is nearer in spirit to the anchorites of Egypt. It is the extreme of asceticism in the hard dry convention of its painting. He is out of the world, if it is only a red brick wall that divides him from it. And yet, but for the difference in its properties, this might be the portrait of Calvin, of Huss, of Zwingle, or of any stern reformer of the faith.

This is a person, then, who is antithesis to what he seems to be. He is no charlatan, but he may have forsaken that in which he began. He is the apostate or renegade, who does not know, yet, whether he is right. It is as the portrait of a renegade, someone who had lapsed in spirit, if not openly and in the flesh, that I knew this picture from my earliest memories. Something more than he had intended, and of which he did not know the meaning, guided the hand of the painter and gave to this obscure picture, which is of sound workmanship, if little more, an odd and transcendental quality, made of it a thing exceptional and apart. If it be angelic or diabolic possession, which, then, is this example before our eyes? The fact that we, who read or write these words, may have no surety of either, does not diminish the mystery. Its truths, however strongly we may deny them, are to be seen on every side. And

\* Walcheren and its adjacent islands, forming part of the province of Zeeland, remained in the hands of Spain until 1574, when it was wrested from them by the Dutch confederates. Marinus, then, was a Spanish subject throughout his life.

## *Dividing of the Sheep and Goats*

we, who do not believe in them, may form another body to ourselves, to whom other mysteries are applicable. But there is another and more appalling predicament. There were many at that time in hiding, though outwardly professing the principles they may have doubted or abhorred. They were in concealment, even under the eyes of their pursuers. They were living in an alien race and dared not reveal themselves. A life, spent thus, in the austerities of religion, would be doubly wasted. And this consideration brings us to the mystery of this man in red.

Look again at the painting! He is still reading in the book that lies before him, pondering on mortality and immortality. But, the whole time, he is looking beyond the book and out of it. These are the words he is reading:

‘TVNC SEDEBIT JESVS SVPER SEDFM MAJESTATIS  
SVE ET CONGREGABANTVR ANTE EVM OMNES GEN-  
TES ET SEPERABIT EOS SICVT PASTOR SEGREGAT. .’

and there the line breaks off. So it is the dividing of the sheep from the goats upon which he is meditating. It is the separation, not of the dead from the living, but of those who have lived and those who have been driven. It is the parting of real and unreal, of the true and false. All are one or the other, inevitably, and beyond possibility of contradiction. Whether it is conscious effort, or is born of helplessness, does not matter, neither is it of moment if they alter or waver from one rank to the other. That we, who read these words, may have no surety of this does not diminish the sound and terror of the words. For the sheep and the goats are always divided. It is one of the eternal truths.



Never say that the night is quite silent. After long interval there comes a sound like the tap of a fingernail. It is a little ringing noise upon glass or china, against something that lies upon the washstand, or the china ashtray on the table. It is as though a hand was feeling for its way about, but there is no sound of fingers. A few moments later it could be a ringing from the electric light bulb, as it were a resonance of its glass particles, a clear note which fades off into silence, and there is nothing more. What are such

## *Evil Dawn*

sounds? They are little bells or harps that catch an echo, a vibration. There are tremors and shakings that are too small for us to feel, but which are magnified when they touch a fired surface. It is the feel of an expert and felonious hand, so that it is only human to lie awake and listen, and presently a coal drops in the grate, or the smell of dawn comes through the open window.

For our present purpose the hour is not as young as that. It is early morning, but is neither sweetbreath, nor smelling of the rain. But we will put on clothes and come down to the door. This is a fearful and appalling dawn. The yewtrees droop down their pinions as though they were torn flags held in dead men's hands. The boughs are black and ghastly, absolutely still, and wet with every moisture, rain or dew, or their own exudation from the stems. Were there light to see these by, the trunks would be blood-red with a damp, like perspiration, on their shining patches. The simile is of a rook's black plumes dabbled with his blood, and his dead beak drooped open and ghastly upon his chest. A curious grey light hangs over all. It has emerged, dripping and terrible, out of the night. There should be a dead man lying in the yewtrees, dead of starvation, with his mouth gone green from the munge of nettles. There is no sound except the dripping of the leaves. It is this drip, drip, like the drip of blood or perspiration, the seeping and staining of this evil dawn. And, of course, it has the sound of footsteps. It is like a soft footstep that follows close behind.

Along the country road, climbing to the ridge for its view across the fields, the whole sky is broken in confusion. Above, in his closed cabin, many miles away between London and the South, the airman drones. His engine halts and rattles, and he may be limping home. It is three-thirty in the morning. There is not a star and not a light to be seen. It is the half-world, when babes are born and tired men die. Suddenly, there is lightning, like an act of war and long thunder in the distance. A noise like a great and terrible rushing in the cornfield, next the road, as though it were a machine or a huge engine coming, and it has begun to rain in the wood, behind the hedge. A few drops fall upon the road and, in a moment, it is pouring. This, at last, is the true smell of the dawn. It comes up from the wet metal of the roadway. In a few minutes the rain is over. There is immediate and magical subtlety in the colour of the fields, oats and wheat and barley like different con-

## *The Bestiary*

tinents, each with their own gods, their own mythology and poetry. Now, before men are awake, would be the time to think of this, of the oaten pipes, the wheatsheafs, and the pearled barley. And, besides, the birds have started singing. It is the Aubade, or early morning. But, already, it has begun to waste. The sun comes up into a stormy sky. Today is spoiled right from the start. It is as light, now, as it will ever be. An endless, hourless wetness down the hedges and across the fields. A sighing wind and a soaking seeping rain.

Ah! this is not as we would have had it be. It is only for today, and it may change tomorrow. Or it may last a few days, and will spoil the harvest. Yet, an evil dawn means something. There were clear portents in the air. For this was horrible and evil, the hour after an earthquake or a great disaster. Or is the storm yet to come? The sky is still shuddering with lightning, and the dark clouds may stay for days or years. The past is as the world was, and as it might have been. The future is uncertain except in misery for many, where there could be enough for all. Religion and the future life are bankrupt everywhere. But the cloud of ignorance will come again. It is the hour of the renegade and the Wandering Jew. The roads are choked with persons fleeing. No longer are dissent or passive disagreement possible. They end but in prison, or in standing at the fatal wall. Even the tramp and Gypsy have passports and signed papers. Every house is numbered and there are no children who do not go to school. All lights are shaded, the artificial sun is blackened out. The pattern of ugliness is stamped on everything. There is no leniency, nor commutation. The burden falls on all alike and grinds into poverty and subservience.

There have been many gods, and many ways to worship them. The red anchorite was a philosopher and an ascetic, brother to Doctor Faustus and ready, like him, to sign his hand upon the parchment. It was the dividing of the sheep from the goats upon which he meditated in the picture. But the segregation is accomplished and already done. All men, at this moment, are divided into sheep and goats. The herds are within the pens. There are armed men outside the hurdles, and none can escape their fate. Soon the slaughtermen will come round and choose their victims. In the mind of the red hermit there were the innocent and guilty; and he may have inclined to the goats, who have more liberty and

### *Different Gods for Different Men*

can wander in the rocks. It is not enough to be sheeplike; but neither is it necessary to be a lion. Bees of the hive are as admirable for their qualities, there are the swan, the peacock, and the swift-winged swallow. In the huge bestiary there are alternations to the sheep and lion, and to the sheep and goats. There are wings and claws and talons; sharp beaks and slow mandibles, the serpent's coils; the lashing of the armoured tail; jagged forearms, like the cruel mantis, who pretends to pray and then rears itself into a posture to strike terror, the soft turtledove, the mermaid of the seas; the gazelle and the hippopotamus; the shark and the gold-fish, the iron-beaked eagle and the robin.

And, in the same manner, many gods have been worshipped; or there need be none at all. The promised advantages are invariably the same. They differ only in their kind, with instinct of climate and environment. The same heaven could not open at the honeysuckle door and for the nomads of the Koko-Nor. There are differences between the lodge of deerskin and the iron grille upon the golden wall; the wooden cabin, and the fountain and the honeycomb, between the endless plain and the blue mountains; between the wood of cypress and the waterfall, between the pampas and the crocus lawn; the blue deep of Arethusa and the lake of mists; the lotus and the bulrushes; plumed warriors, and skins of almond and of sandalwood. There are many shades of colour between the sable and the jasmine; silken turbans, and hair of wool dressed out with clay and dung, robes of the mulberry tree, and naked bodies rubbed with ashes, Corydon and the pygmies; giants of Patagonia, and the long-haired Mandans; the sloe-eyed, and blue pebbles of the Northern rains, Pharaoh, with his formal beard, and the smooth Tartars. It is the difference between the desert of incense and the lotus pool, the tent of goat's hair and the lacquered cave. In the paintings of Ajanta there is no golden hair; Byzantium held the sculptures of the naked age but, like the Moslems, forbade statuary; Venus, found by fishermen, could be carried to a monastery; Zeus a naked god, hurls his thunderbolt in the central hall of the museum. He could, as well, stand on the platform of the railway station, where, indeed, by popular superstition, legends could begin to grow around him. His statue has a green patina from long immersion in the sea. When new, it was not beautiful. It was a bronze statue of a bearded man, with blank

## *Music of Miguel Eslava*

holes for eyes, like the mask of an actor. The art is deliberate, for the town hall and the public gardens. Twenty centuries under the ocean have redeemed it and have changed its values. It should be garlanded with seaweeds as Poseidon's guest.

Opposite to this is the dance of all the senses. The dizzying temples of the Indies; bluebell spires that climb in the distance out of the cornfield, monuments that are the 'guglia', or lily of the piazza; towers that move on wheels, or are carried through the streets, the blind harpist in the Lithuanian birchwoods who plays his *cembalo* at the feast of mushrooms and makes the ancient legends live again

We hear it in the adoration of another school of music, where they dance with castanets before the altar. That is to the tawdry airs of Miguel Eslava, tunes like paper roses, falsely qualified as operatic, but owing more to popular sentiment and the prettiness of gilt cupids and gilded sunbursts \* I heard such an Easter Mass in the Catholic church at Santorin, the front rows packed with children in their bright dresses, and that human breath charged and charged again from the swinging censer. It was music that is forbidden by the Vatican, the bastard of Haydn's Masses, and inspired from the same sources as Miguel Eslava, not of Spain, though, but probably Sicilian or Neapolitan. A wheezing organ played roulades and flying ornaments, vistas through gilded trellises, spangled images, seraphic faces, pink and white virtues, sugar-sweet, like sugared almonds, the plumes of the seraphim, their dove throats, and the lacing or diamonding of their wings. Heaven was all artifice; and Nature, a tree made in the classroom under a glass shade.

Some few of the airs were waltzes, simple tunes of the Savoyard decked out like summer sledges, contradictions of the false and true. And there were quickly moving choruses that were gallops of the coryphées. Could this music be performed, though, in the theatre, its own character would be at once apparent. For it is, in peasant style, a dance of all the senses. The ballet has need of

\* Miguel Eslava, b 1807, d 1878. The *Miserere* of this composer is performed in Seville Cathedral on Wednesday of Holy Week, and upon the following day, only. His light operatic style, part Spanish, part influenced by Donizetti and Rossini, is personified in the music to which the Seises dance to their castanets, in costumes of the time of Philip IV, before the High Altar, a survival of the old Visigothic or Mozarabic ritual.

## *Easter Mass at Santorin*

scenery. But this creates its own images as it goes along. They are clichés of the picture book, pretty as cut-out Valentines, pink roses, and blue forget-me-nots in an Alhambra of pierced paper. The silvered snow, a Southern luxury, glitters through the openings. These are sugarplum delights, packed in pretty boxes. Yet their sweet tooth pleasures, if artifice, are yet genuine and not faked. Such is the balm they would have rubbed upon their hearts. It is the window they would open for the last look of their eyes. Their souls would leave their bodies at the ambrosial winds, the little smiling zephyrs. The sweetness of these successive airs was cloying as sandalwood, a confectioned fragrance of little separate cells, one and then another as the tunes unfold. Their music, which may have been written a hundred years ago, had become Oriental in this isle of the Aegean. It had to be considered that, outside the church, lay the landscape of Santorin, an island like a crescent moon with its horns extending for some twenty miles and on its ridge, upon three hills, the whitewashed walls and domes of Phira, its chief village. This lies on the bony spine of the island and on the other side, down a slope of vineyards, there is the sea again. Inside this horn or sickle moon, which was a volcanic crater, are the Kaimenae, black islets of sulphurous and smoking lava. The whole landscape is among the wonders of the Orient, but we would only mention, here, the houses that are cubist in design with flat or barrel roofs and the many little chapels with their blue or whitewashed domes. It may be only when they are most characteristically Southern, at Seville or at Santorin, that circumstances suggest some unknown country, still further to the South, of which these are but the frontier towns. This must lie, like another Atlantis, below the ocean. Here and there are signs of it. Easter Mass at Santorin belonged to this land of easy adoration, where Sacred and Profane meet together and are not divided, a humble paradise, but a feast of all the senses.

In this day of degradation those persons who would stay out the storm must be content to wander by themselves. History has come back, where things of beauty or intellect are concerned, to the age of the beachcombers who were constrained to search for their food along the fringes of the shore. It is in humble places that past and future are hiding from the present. You may travel for many hundred miles and find no hope. The golden age has come



### *Finale in Form of a Bacchanale*

down to the age of gold, which, in its turn, is dying. In remote corners, if you search for them, the living relics are still found. There is this much evidence of the pleasures of the senses. In them, there lies the prospect of eventual improvement, for all the anachronism in those pathetic traces. So much that has been learnt must be forgotten first. But generalities must not spoil the pattern of this adventure. Having climbed outside the edifice, to take a look at it, the time has come to go to its top storey, which, in this stormy weather, touches on the rain cloud and, even, sways a little in all the winds that pass. But let the tower fall down! Pull its stones and bricks apart! Let it come crashing to the earth!

The antique magic is in the air again. Forget the present and the future. Nor, in particular, is this the past. Like music, it must live in its own melody and make its shape. The ram's horn trumpet blows. It is the Bacchanale. The breath winds long and steady in its twisted volutes, more pastoral than the conch shell which calls the tritons and divinities of ocean. Again and again it blows. They come from teeming India down the dusty plains, gods rubbed with sandalwood and powdered blue, youths of the cassia flower with towers of jasmine in their hair, the sacred milkmaids, the rout of the flowering precincts, male and female, and dark cupids. Their tamed animals are led along, peacocks which dance to music, the striped tiger and the purring lion. It is their ecstasy. They close their eyes and listen motionless; or start to weep. The living gods are carried past, mute and ineffable, their followers in frenzy.

Some walk slowly with iron barbs in their flesh, dragging great weights with them, quilled like the porcupine with hooks and wire, in a halo, a palisade, the points all trembling. Some hold the trident and come forward, dancing. Others are naked, but for ashes, with circles and ugly signs painted on them, the wild men, the sacred vagabonds who sleep beneath the trees. There are Brahmans in yellow robes, whom none may touch, who perform miracles; those who control their breath and are suspended between life and death, others who, by fasting, hover over their bodies and are rapt in contemplation. The long sleep of the lotus tank and the slow unfolding. The inscrutable smile, and darting and swaying of the serpent neck. Language of the wrist and hand to hypnotize the senses, for such are the flower-soft Indies, now advancing. Monks, in their colleges of red or yellow, where the pearl-red pillars look

### *Finale in Form of a Bacchanale*

towards the mountains. The ponds bear on their surface the blue lotus. It is the Abbey of Nalanda. Time was nodding, nodding, in those flower-hung days.

But there are contingents, too, from across the Indian main. Their ships of sandalwood churn the foaming ocean. And the flowers and winds are different. It is another world. Their men and women have the pose of dancers and move with hieratic step, but softly as animals. Their king rides on an elephant, and none may pronounce his name, it is so holy. Before him march a company of Amazons, and in the procession there are carriages drawn by goats. It is a circus triumph, but the visitors are of another creation from ourselves, with a different tread, passing us like flowers blown by.

And the scene alters to the lacquered Indies. It is the land of the palanquin. There are golden plains and the pale shadow of the gingko. But we take it in its islands, far from the rites of the Shaman and their Northern fogs. There are mimed plays and antique legends danced to music of the gamelan. To our untrained ear it is the only music of the Orient: announcing a god out of a waterfall, out of a moonbeam, a sea god glittering in his pearlshell armour, always an entrance and a diminishment, a dying off, as though the bells and gongs died down in another world, of unknown crops and harvests, where the temples are built up in a day and destroyed at the golden dawn, being but scenery for the sacred trances. The gamelan, too, is music of the child actor: the sacred serpent coiling from the ground: a myriad heroes and divinities with supple limbs in the long drawn epic: poetic images interpreted by the wrists and hands, after which the dancer is a child again. Suddenly the wind of inspiration seizes on young and old alike, and all descend into the nether world and come back, fainting, in poetic stupor. They lie prostrate on the earth, and for an hour or two are senseless, in the way of persons who have tasted death. This is their formal ecstasy: while the dying gamelan announces a new drama.

We have, as well, the third or mock sceptre of the Indies, submissive races who bowed their necks and died. They amble along the wide causeways, bringing fruits and flowers that are unknown, to market. The shell trumpet sounds thrice from the high pyramid, and priests, who do not change their raiment, and whose long

### *Finale in Form of a Bacchanale*

hair is matted with the gore, plunge a jade knife into the victim and hurl his heartless body to the crowd below. In a distant land of this continent there are golden figures of the sun and moon: golden images of the fruits and flowers: and, for clue to the country, llamas, lifesize with golden fleeces. The stone walls of the temple are joined without mortar, and the work of giants. Within are virgin priestesses. In another place a huge pole like a ship's mast is set up. In their yearly festival, Indians, six at a time, climb to the top of this and, standing perilously for a moment, lash the long ropes to themselves and leap towards the earth, spinning, like lunar satellites, around their parent maypole. Head downward, in feathered headdress they revolve, until the rope unwinds its length and brings them down to the crowd who wait below and lift them from their sacred ecstasy and lay them on the ground, their Daedalian flight accomplished \*

But there is the crash of cymbals and of tambourines. These are milky lands of the violet and the cyclamen. Music, itself, is a bacchanale in shape, starting, again and again, and returning in its form, crowned and wreathed in flowers, shaking the lilyed thyrsus, garlanded with ivy, the fig leaf, and the vine. It is the return from Bacchic India. The world was taught the use of wine, the cultivation of the earth, and the manner of making honey.

There are signs of India. The priests have put serpents in their hair, and in the wildness of their looks feign madness and the sacred frenzy, while virgins carry baskets filled with gold and fruit, and snakes wreath and crawl from these to daze the senses. The hiss and coil of serpents are in the music, which darts and trembles in its rhythms, and proclaims the theme. Their prisoners accompany them, though it was a conquest without bloodshed. There are tumbrils loaded with purple grapes, beside which walk the captives, behind the chariot, and the lion and tiger.

When men were taught to till the earth, and the use of wine and honey, this was all, and enough, for most of them to know. What they have learned since is mostly folly. The arts came from the

\* It has only lately been discovered that the juego de los voladores, or flying game, is still practised by the Totonac and Otomi Indians. Drawings of these are to be found in two Aztec codices, those of Porfirio Diaz and Fernandez Leal. It was seen by Bernal Diaz and described by Fray Juan de Torquemada. The flyers used to be clothed as various birds. Cf. *Mexican Mosaic* by Rodney Gallop (Faber & Faber, London, 1939)

### *Finale in Form of a Bacchanale*

vineyard and the olive grove. They learned letters from the patterns of the constellations, to foretell the truth, and translate the dead. These are mysteries, still, and no one is the wiser. The lyric moment is still a mystery between the vine and olive. Sacred and Profane are two schools of thought, two hemispheres, two continents, a heaven and a hell, in accordance with the winds that blow.

But the music grows louder. The living have no time to think. They must take one side, or other. The siren and the time signal have been music in their day, but the bacchanale will drive away the present and the future. Here the crocus grows beneath the cedartree in a vernal forest giving on the vines. All the airs are perfumed and sigh sweet with resin. The music thrills and empties in the hollow valley. Here Sacred and Profane meet together in the dance, which loudens with the shaking of the lily sceptre and beats with the tambourines and crashes with the cymbals. There is one god, or many gods, but all are worshipped here. Or no god at all, but what the music means. Is there not word enough in the vineyard and the cedar breath? The creaking tumbrils pass by in a dream, while the bacchanale comes back again in louder triumph.

Where, then, is wisdom? In the arts, and not in war. In the cold and in the heat. In this music and its lilies. In shocks of corn and in the golden locks of children. In the arts and in the senses. In the bright wing and in the golden leaf. In night and day, or sun and moon, but not among the dead. In this there lies no difference. Profane or Sacred. Sacred or Profane.





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